United Nations S/2018/406

Security Council

Distr.: General
1 May 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 30 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period from 28 to 30 April 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

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Annex to the letter dated 30 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (28 April 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported five incidents of gunfire: four in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and one in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported two incidents of gunfire: one in Hama Governorate and one in Homs Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Balat, Aleppo Governorate: 445 food parcels were distributed. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 1.9 tons.

In total, 1,795 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,538.86 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 111 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 78,969 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,508.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (29 April 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported four incidents of gunfire: three in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and one in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported four incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: one in Dar'a, one in Homs, one in Hama and one in Idlib.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Maskanah, Homs Governorate: 600 food parcels were distributed to residents. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 2.6 tons.

In total, 1,796 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,541.46 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 120 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 78,089 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,508.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (30 April 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported six incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: two in Aleppo, two in Homs and two in Ladhiqiyah.

The Turkish representative office has reported five incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: three in Homs, one in Hama and one in Ladhiqiyah.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Mazlum, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate: 445 food parcels were distributed. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 1.9 tons.

In total, 1,797 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,543.36 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 86 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 79,175 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours one ceasefire agreement has been signed with Samma al-Hunaydat in Suwayda' Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,509.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/407

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Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

I. Introduction and Mission priorities

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), by which the Council established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and requested me to report at regular intervals on the implementation of its mandate. The report covers the activities of UNMIK, and developments related thereto, from 17 January to 15 April 2018.

2. The priorities of the Mission remain to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and in the region. UNMIK continues its constructive engagement with Pristina and Belgrade, all communities in Kosovo and regional and international actors. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) continue to perform their roles under the framework of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) continues its presence in Kosovo, in line with the statement by the President of the Security Council of 26 November 2008 (S/PRST/2008/44) and my report of 24 November 2008 (S/2008/692). The United Nations agencies, funds and programmes work closely with the Mission in furtherance of the "delivering as one" initiative.

II. Key political and security developments

3. A number of developments during the reporting period heightened tensions and negatively impacted relations between Belgrade and Pristina. In March, shortly after the resumption of the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, the Kosovo authorities responded negatively to a notification that the Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of Serbia, Marko Đurić, was to travel to North Mitrovica and warned him not to visit. On 26 March, however, Mr. Đurić travelled to North Mitrovica to attend a round-table session of the internal dialogue on Kosovo of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, together with a member of President Vučić's cabinet, three ministers of the Kosovo government and local Kosovo leaders. Kosovo special police units entered the building where the session was being held and, using stun grenades and tear gas, arrested Mr. Đurić. Several people were injured, including the Kosovo Minister of Agriculture, of the Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija party, who was hospitalized for three days, two mayors and journalists and bystanders. Mr. Đurić was manhandled by the Kosovo Police down a central street in Pristina, before media and onlookers,

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and taken to a police station. After a brief court hearing, he was transferred from Pristina and released at Gate 3 on the Administrative Boundary Line.

4. President Vučić described Mr. Đurić's arrest and detention as a "humiliation", a "brutal provocation" and against agreed protocols. The Kosovo leadership called the action an appropriate response to ignoring their refusal to allow the visit. My Special Representative for Kosovo described the events of 26 March as "unacceptable" and joined the European Union and other international partners in calling for calm and responsible leadership by all concerned.

5. The incident had immediate repercussions. The following day, after a meeting with President Vučić in Belgrade, the Serbian List leadership announced its intention to withdraw from the governing coalition in Kosovo. The Serbian List also announced that, on 20 April, it would start working unilaterally on the establishment of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo, as envisaged under the 19 April 2013 First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations. Nevertheless, on 29 March, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Communities and Returns of the Serbian List participated in a government meeting chaired by the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj. At the meeting, the Deputy Prime Minister indicated that the Serbian List remained open to meaningful dialogue, and called on the government to launch an investigation into the events of 26 March and to proceed with the implementation of the 2013 agreement concerning the establishment of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities.

6. In another significant development, on 29 March the Kosovo Border Police arrested five Turkish citizens with permanent residency status in Kosovo, allegedly on account of their connection with the Hizmet/Gülen movement. They were taken to the police station in Pristina and reportedly denied access to counsel. According to their attorneys, their residency permits were revoked, and they were expelled from Kosovo to Turkey on the same day. A sixth Turkish citizen was also arrested in a separate incident on 29 March and expelled to Turkey with the other five. Both President Thaçi and the Prime Minister, Mr. Haradinaj, condemned the arrest and expulsion of the Turkish nationals and disavowed any prior knowledge of the operation. In response to the incident, on 30 March Mr. Haradinaj announced the dismissal of the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Director of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency and called for a full investigation into the expulsions, allegedly conducted in secrecy. On 13 April, Prime Minister Haradinaj appointed Bejtush Gashi as the new Minister of Internal Affairs.

7. Prior to these developments, the government of Kosovo achieved an important benchmark in the European Union integration process for Kosovo when it ratified the agreement on territorial delineation signed with the Republic of Montenegro in 2015. After several failed attempts to hold a ratification vote, the Assembly of Kosovo reconvened for a vote on 21 March. Members of the opposition party Vetëvendosje (Movement for Self-Determination) again sought to obstruct the vote, including by throwing tear gas during the Assembly deliberations. Following a decree signed by the President of the Assembly to secure the Assembly hall, Kosovo police escorted 13 Assembly members belonging to Vetëvendosje out of the Assembly hall; seven Assembly members belonging to Vetëvendosje were subsequently arrested in connection with the tear gas incidents. In the early evening of 21 March, the Assembly was able to proceed with the vote, resulting in the ratification of the agreement by the required two-thirds majority.

8. Several factors positively influenced the ratification vote, including a visit on 14 February to Kosovo by the Prime Minister of Montenegro, Duško Marković, which helped reaffirm a mutual commitment by Kosovo and Montenegro to promote bilateral relations. Subsequently, on 16 February, President Thaçi and the President

of Montenegro, Filip Vujanović, signed a joint statement in Podgorica, in which they agreed to the establishment of a joint working body to address any disputes concerning the territorial delineation. In a joint statement of 21 March, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, and the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, welcomed the ratification by the Assembly of Kosovo of the territorial delineation agreement with Montenegro, noting that it fulfilled a key criterion for visa liberalization for Kosovo.

9. In other developments, following the attempt in December 2017 by 43 members of the Assembly of Kosovo to revoke a 2015 law in support of the work on the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office, on 22 January 2018 the Assembly submitted a request for the government's opinion on the matter. On 1 February, Mr. Haradinaj stressed that the government would follow due process before reverting to the Assembly with its opinion. On 5 February, President Thaçi, in his address to the government, stated that the establishment of the Specialist Chambers was "unfair", but that the Kosovo authorities "assumed certain responsibilities and obligations" and "will fulfil them in accordance with the agreements reached".

10. On 6 February, the European Commission adopted a new strategy for European Union engagement with the Western Balkans, entitled "A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans". On 28 February, a European Union delegation comprising High Representative Mogherini, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and Commissioner Hahn, visited Pristina to discuss the role of Kosovo under the new European Union strategy for the region, which continues to take a staggered approach to integration. During the visit, the delegation stressed that, without effective and comprehensive normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, there could not be lasting stability in the region, and Serbia and Kosovo could not advance on their respective European paths.

11. On 13 February, the European Union Election Observation Mission presented its final report on the Kosovo municipal elections of 22 October 2017. The report contains a number of recommendations for improving future electoral processes in Kosovo, which are being reviewed by the Kosovo Central Election Commission and other relevant Kosovo institutions.

12. The government of Kosovo continued to advocate the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into an army, while accepting that this would need to be pursued through a constitutional amendment. On 5 March 2018, at a ceremony held at the headquarters of the Kosovo Security Force in Pristina to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Kosovo Liberation Army, President Thaçi also advocated the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into an army through a constitutional amendment, in partnership with the United States of America and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The leadership of Serbia remained strongly opposed to such a transformation, which it considers to be a violation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

13. Incidents affecting non-majority communities included damage to sites of significance to Kosovo Serbs. On 12 February 2018, a memorial plaque near the village of Zoçishtë/Začište in Rahovec/Orahovac municipality, dedicated to two Kosovo Serb journalists who went missing in 1998, was forcibly removed and its base damaged. On 1 March 2018, in the majority Kosovo Serb village of Velika Hoča/Hoçë e Madhe in Rahovec/Orahovac municipality, the Serbian flag was removed and

the flag pole damaged at the memorial dedicated to the Kosovo Serbs who went missing or were killed during the 1998–1999 conflict.

III. Northern Kosovo

14. The slow progress of the investigation into the murder on 16 January of the Kosovo Serb politician, Oliver Ivanović, in North Mitrovica, coupled with the events of 26 March described above, exacerbated resentment among the Kosovo Serb population in northern Kosovo. Initially led by Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian prosecutors of the newly integrated Basic Prosecution of Mitrovica, the investigation into Mr. Ivanović's murder was taken over by the EULEX Special Prosecution Office of Kosovo on 7 March, owing to the "complexity of the case". At the end of the reporting period, no progress had been reported in the investigation. Of note is that the first information-sharing meeting on the investigation between representatives of the interior ministries from Belgrade and Pristina took place at Gate 3 on the Administrative Boundary Line on 13 March, over two months after the murder.

15. Approximately 5,000 people attended Mr. Ivanović's funeral on 17 January, which was declared an official day of mourning in North Mitrovica. On 20 January, President Vučić, accompanied by Marko Đurić, travelled to Kosovo, visiting various locations north and south of the Ibër/Ibar River, including the site of Mr. Ivanović's murder in North Mitrovica. Addressing the crowd at Banjska monastery in Zveçan/Zvečan municipality, President Vučić highlighted the importance of dialogue between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians in order to preserve peace and security, but also to advance the interests of Kosovo Serbs.

16. On 18 February, flyers were posted in Zubin Potok municipality, threatening members of the Kosovo Serb community who had joined the Kosovo Security Force following the most recent recruitment campaign directed at members of non-majority communities. The flyers also criticized the municipality, including the mayor, for not preventing such recruitment. In response, KFOR conducted enhanced patrols in the municipality, which continued until mid-March. The Kosovo Police also conducted special operations in the municipality, including static patrols and increased foot patrols, to provide increased protection.

17. Two round tables were organized in northern Kosovo under the framework of the internal dialogue on Kosovo launched by President Vučić, before the meeting in North Mitrovica that was interrupted as a result of the events of 26 March. The first round table, with Kosovo Serb youth and students, was held in North Mitrovica on 8 March and focused on the importance of higher education for Kosovo Serbs. The second — a televised meeting with civil society representatives held in North Mitrovica on 14 March — addressed the departure of Kosovo Serbs from Kosovo and challenges faced by Kosovo Serbs in obtaining personal documents. As well as the discussions held in northern Kosovo, six additional round tables involving various segments of Serbian society were held throughout Serbia under the framework of President Vučić's internal dialogue on Kosovo.

18. On 7 April, Marko Đurić attended the Orthodox Easter midnight liturgy at Banjska monastery; this was Mr. Đurić's first visit to Kosovo after his arrest and expulsion on 26 March. About 400 people attended the liturgy.

19. Following the municipal elections held in Kosovo in October 2017, the municipal assemblies of Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zveçan/Zvečan formed women's caucuses, with support from their respective mayors. On 7 March, on the eve of International Women's Day, the municipality of Zveçan/Zvečan inaugurated the women's caucus with a panel discussion on the role of women in society. The event,

sponsored by UNMIK, was jointly opened by the mayor and my Special Representative.

IV. Normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina

20. The European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina resumed after a long hiatus. The technical negotiation teams of Belgrade and Pristina, led by Marko Đurić and Avni Arifi, respectively, met in Brussels on 26 and 27 February and again from 19 to 21 March. The teams reviewed the implementation of the agreements reached, including on freedom of movement, integrated boundary management, the association/community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo, the bridge in Mitrovica and energy. The teams agreed that further progress in a number of areas would require consensus at a higher political level.

21. On 23 March, High Representative Mogherini met with Presidents Vučić and Thaçi in Brussels to discuss, under the framework of the new phase of the dialogue, the full implementation of all existing agreements and preparations for a comprehensive agreement on the normalization of relations. Following the meeting, High Representative Mogherini stressed the urgent need to start with the establishment of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities. She also welcomed the continued commitment expressed by both Presidents to the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, recalling that progress on their respective European Union integration agendas is firmly linked to progress in the dialogue.

22. Further to the events of 26 March, High Representative Mogherini travelled to Belgrade, where she met with President Vučić on 27 March to discuss the "latest developments and the future of the European Union-facilitated dialogue for normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina". In a communiqué issued after the meeting, the High Representative reiterated the importance that the European Union attaches to the dialogue and to the implementation of agreements reached.

23. Throughout the reporting period, Belgrade stressed that it had fulfilled nearly all its obligations under the agreements reached under the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue, while Pristina did not proceed with the establishment of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities, which is of great significance to Belgrade and the Kosovo Serbs. In separate addresses to the media on 25 February and 24 March, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Serbia, Ivica Dačić, warned that Belgrade could withdraw from its commitments under the agreements reached in Brussels, if concrete steps were not taken swiftly toward the establishment of the association/community.

24. On 5 April, Prime Minister Haradinaj announced the resumption of efforts to draft the statute of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities, to be completed within four months. The Serbian List, however, characterized the proposal as "unacceptable", stressing that the association/community should be established in accordance with the Brussels agreement of 25 August 2015, not the Kosovo Constitution. In this respect, the Serbian List remained concerned that the Kosovo authorities would insist on respecting the Constitutional Court ruling of 23 December 2015, according to which a number of provisions in the 2015 Brussels agreement are not in full compliance with the Kosovo Constitution.

V. Returns, reconciliation, cultural heritage and community relations

25. During the reporting period, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recorded three voluntary returns to Kosovo by members of non-majority communities. In total, UNHCR has recorded 27,792 voluntary returns by members of non-majority communities in Kosovo since 2000.

26. UNHCR continued to support members of the Ashkali, Egyptian and Roma communities in Kosovo in obtaining personal documentation and resolving civil status issues, which inter alia enables access to public services. During the reporting period, UNHCR assisted 92 individuals to obtain civil documentation.

27. On 14 February and 15 March, UNMIK, in partnership with the Kosovo Ministry of Communities and Returns, contributed to the organization of two inter-municipal forums held in Pejë/Peć and in Gjilan/Gnjilane, respectively. The forums addressed strategies for increasing returns and the role of municipal bodies in protecting and promoting the rights of communities.

28. During the period under review, 23 municipalities south of the Ibër/Ibar River reconstituted their respective communities committees, bringing to 28 the total number of municipalities with such mandatory anti-discrimination and community protection mechanisms in place. Of note is that members of non-majority communities, including Ashkali, Croats, Egyptians, Montenegrins, Roma, Serbs and Turks, account for approximately 53 per cent of members of the communities committees. Members of non-majority communities were appointed to key municipal positions in Prizren and Kamenicë/Kamenica municipalities.

29. The Implementation and Monitoring Council, established by the government of Kosovo in February 2013 to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the Law on Special Protective Zones, with a focus on the provision relating to the protection of the Serbian Orthodox Church religious and cultural heritage in Kosovo, reconvened on 13 and 23 March 2018, after three years of inactivity. At the meetings, representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church raised concerns about a plan of the Deçan/Dečani municipality to build a transit road to Montenegro through the special protective zone of the Visoki Dečani monastery. In response, representatives of the Kosovo government reiterated their commitment to respect the special protective zone; a formal decision on the matter, however, remains pending.

30. The Kosovo Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports worked in cooperation with the Prizren municipal department of urbanism to prevent further illegal demolition activities in the protected historic centre of Prizren. A team of cultural heritage inspectors from the Ministry cooperated with the municipal inspectorate to identify illegal demolitions and constructions in the protected zone and handed over the cases identified to the judicial authorities.

VI. Rule of law and human rights

31. On 5 February, three years after the adoption of the law granting legal status to victims of sexual violence during the Kosovo conflict and establishing a legal basis for their compensation, the government of Kosovo officially launched the application process for wartime survivors of sexual violence to be granted legal status as a victim of war. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare authorized four non-governmental organizations specializing in this area to support the application process.

32. During the reporting period, efforts continued to ensure that the justice system in Kosovo is in line with international and European Union standards. In early February, the government reviewed and approved a package of key amendments to legislation regulating the functioning of the judicial system, including the law on courts and the law on the disciplinary responsibilities of judges and prosecutors. On 13 April, the government approved a new draft of the Kosovo criminal code, which includes, inter alia, stricter penalties for offences related to corruption and misuse of official duty. Presenting the bill to the government, the Minister of Justice said that the new code would be in line with European Union standards and would enable Kosovo to successfully fight corruption and organized crime.

33. The Kosovo court system continued to assume responsibility for presiding over new cases hitherto dealt with by EULEX. For example, on 20 February, a case involving a former member of the Assembly of Kosovo, Azem Syla, and 38 other individuals, accused of expropriating socially owned properties in Kosovo, resulting in damages of EUR 30 million to the government budget, was transferred from EULEX to local judges. The charges included fraud, money-laundering, organized crime and falsification of official documents. On 12 March, Mr. Syla was released from custody and placed under house arrest.

34. In a separate case, on 26 February, the Appeals Court overturned the verdict of the Basic Court of Pristina, which in November 2017 had convicted three Vetëvendosje party members, including a member of the Assembly, of throwing a grenade at the Assembly building in 2016. The case was sent for retrial. On the same day, the defendants were released from detention on remand. In a separate development, on 9 March, the Basic Court of Gjakovë/Đakovica acquitted, owing to a lack of evidence, former Kosovo Liberation Army commander and current Deputy Prime Minister, Fatmir Limaj, of war crimes in relation to the murder of two Kosovo Albanians in 1998 in Malishevë/Mališevo municipality, where Limaj served as zone commander.

35. On 21 March, 12 persons were arrested, 8 in Kosovo and 4 in Slovenia, in connection with the smuggling of 300 migrants from Kosovo to Slovenia. The arrests were the result of a joint operation involving the Kosovo Police, the Kosovo Prosecutor's Office in Mitrovica, the Slovenian National Police, the Slovenian State Prosecutor's Office, EULEX and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol).

36. The appointment of the Specialist Prosecutor of the Specialist Prosecutor's Office, David Schwendiman, came to an end on 31 March, with his deputy serving as Acting Specialist Prosecutor until the appointment of a successor. In a related development on 14 March, 40 lawyers from Kosovo and beyond were cleared to perform defence counsel services in cases before the Kosovo Specialist Court.

37. The International Committee of the Red Cross convened a meeting on 27 February of the Working Group on Missing Persons in relation to the events of 1998–1999 in Kosovo. At the meeting, the Belgrade and Pristina delegations highlighted the need for the Working Group to shift from a humanitarian to a justice-based approach, and to focus on finalizing unsolved cases of missing persons.

38. On 1 March, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennoune, presented her report on Serbia and Kosovo at the thirty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The report includes findings and recommendations following the Special Rapporteur's visit to Serbia and Kosovo from 3 to 14 October 2016. It focuses on the right to participate in cultural life, including the right to access and enjoy cultural heritage without discrimination, and emphasizes the need for an appropriate legal and institutional framework.

39. On 2 March, the first shelter for domestic violence victims in a non-majority area was opened in Novobërdë/Novo Brdo municipality. The shelter will provide a temporary home for victims of domestic violence, regardless of their ethnicity.

VII. Women, peace and security

40. On 5 March, in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), UNMIK hosted the eighth Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security, which focused on women's political participation. The event, which was opened by my Special Representative, together with the Vice-President of the Kosovo Assembly and the head of UN-Women in Kosovo, brought together over 150 participants, including members of the Assembly, government officials, civil society activists and representatives of the international community. The event served as an opportunity to, inter alia, capture the experiences of women candidates in the 2017 elections in Kosovo, discuss structural barriers to women's participation in political life in Kosovo and review the use of electoral gender quotas. Participants identified a need to ensure that Kosovo legislation complies with the standards set by the Law on Gender Equality; promote women to leadership positions within political parties; and address patriarchal norms and stereotypes regarding women's role in politics.

41. A number of additional events were conducted on the occasion of International Women's Day. On 6 March, KFOR organized a conference, bringing together representatives of the Kosovo government, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, focusing on challenges to women's security in Kosovo and the role of women as actors for peace and security. On 8 March, OSCE, with the Embassy of France in Kosovo, organized a high-level forum on property rights of women in Kosovo, which addressed, inter alia, traditional norms that hinder women from claiming and owning property. Participants underlined the impact of women's lack of access to property and inheritance rights on socioeconomic development in Kosovo and the need to improve mechanisms for the protection of women's property rights.

42. On 13 March, the North Mitrovica non-governmental organization Women's Rights, in partnership with the South Mitrovica women's rights organization Mundësia and with support from UNMIK, held its third trust-building dialogue session, entitled "Women in Politics". The event, which brought together Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb women from North and South Mitrovica, highlighted that women's participation in politics remained low in Kosovo and hence that it was necessary for women holding political positions to share their experiences.

VIII. Partnerships and cooperation

43. During the reporting period, UNMIK implemented two confidence-building measures. The first supported three multi-ethnic women's groups in Pejë/Peć, Klinë/Klina and Istog/Istok municipalities in building women's entrepreneurial skills and helping women start up their own businesses. The second, in Istog/Istok municipality, supported the establishment of a community centre and the training of over 200 youth from different ethnic backgrounds in conflict resolution and inter-community trust-building.

44. UNMIK also continued to implement programmatic activities in the areas of trust-building, human rights and rule of law. During the reporting period, 36 activities were launched, in close cooperation with the United Nations Kosovo Team, to improve, inter alia, access to justice, the capacities of Kosovo justice and corrections

institutions to address juvenile delinquency and the capacities of law enforcement agencies to address gender-based and domestic violence. In addition, UNMIK, in close cooperation with the United Nations Kosovo team and other international partners, prepared for a Kosovo trust-building forum, to be held from 6 to 8 May, bringing together representatives from a wide spectrum of Kosovo society, including local government, civil society, academia and media, as well as religious, youth and women's groups.

45. My Special Representative continued his visits to municipalities in Kosovo. On 7 March, he visited Zubin Potok and Zveçan/Zvečan municipalities and discussed recent developments, including the security situation, with the mayors. In Zveçan/Zvečan municipality, he also opened an event hosted by the chair of the municipal assembly and head of the women's caucus, which included a panel discussion on the situation of women, held on the occasion of International Women's Day. On the same day, my Special Representative visited the courthouse in North Mitrovica, where the President of the Basic Court of Mitrovica highlighted challenges related to compliance with language provisions in the law. On 14 March, my Special Representative visited Kamenicë/Kamenica municipality, where the mayor lamented the lack of investment and lack of employment opportunities in the municipality and highlighted progress towards gender parity in local institutions, with 6 out of 11 of the newly appointed municipal directors being women.

46. On 11 April in Pristina, UNMIK organized a working session of a platform comprising youth from mixed ethnic backgrounds under the heading "Stories from the other side". Young women and men discussed challenges to inter-community relations, youth inclusion in decision-making processes at local and central levels and ways of addressing the widening education-to-employment gap, including through capacity-building initiatives for young people.

47. UNMIK continued to provide document certification services. A total of 929 documents were processed, including 451 relating to pensions and 478 to civil status, such as high school and university diplomas, and marriage, birth and death certificates. UNMIK also continued to facilitate liaison between the Kosovo authorities and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). During the reporting period, UNMIK received and processed 45 requests for the issuance of international wanted notices.

IX. Observations

48. I am concerned by signs of deterioration in the relations between Belgrade and Pristina, particularly following the arrest of the Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of Serbia, Marko Đurić, on 26 March. I call on both sides to avoid provocative actions and refrain from inflammatory rhetoric. I urge the leadership in Belgrade and Pristina to continue to address issues of concern through dialogue and to show the political will necessary to ensure full normalization of their mutual relations.

49. The conduct of Kosovo police during a high-profile operation such as the arrest of Mr. Đurić, which resulted in a number of injuries, is cause for concern. A thorough inquiry is needed into the events of 26 March, with corrective action in case of failures to uphold human rights.

50. I note, with concern, the slow pace of progress of the investigation into the murder on 16 January of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović. So long as credible answers and justice are not obtained, mutual suspicions and perceptions of

insecurity will continue to undermine efforts to build trust amongst communities throughout Kosovo.

51. The European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina seems to have reached another standstill following its brief resumption — both at the technical and political levels — in March. I urge both sides to provide new impetus to the dialogue process, in order to ensure the full implementation of all agreements reached to date.

52. I am encouraged by the ongoing efforts to operationalize an integrated Kosovo judiciary, in line with the agreements reached between Belgrade and Pristina under the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue. I call upon the Kosovo institutions involved to provide the necessary support in order to overcome remaining obstacles.

53. I welcome the ratification of the territorial delineation agreement with Montenegro by the Assembly of Kosovo, an indication of the commitment of Kosovo to its European perspective. Despite persistent efforts by some members of the Assembly to obstruct its work, including by violent means, the Assembly managed to conclude a matter that for too long had diverted its attention from other pressing issues.

54. I once again reiterate my call to contribute to the trust fund which was established further to the work of the UNMIK Human Rights Advisory Panel to support the Ashkali, Egyptian and Roma communities affected by lead poisoning in Kosovo. Contributions to the trust fund will support the implementation of projects addressing the most pressing needs of these vulnerable communities, particularly in the areas of health, economic development and infrastructure.

55. I am grateful to my Special Representative, Zahir Tanin, and to the Mission at large for their unwavering commitment to promote progress towards long-term peace and stability for Kosovo and the region, in cooperation with local counterparts and international partners. I also reiterate my appreciation to the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes on the ground for their ongoing collaboration with UNMIK and to the long-standing international partners of the United Nations in Kosovo, including the European Union, KFOR and OSCE.

Annex I

Report of the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the Secretary-General on the activities of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo from 16 January to 15 April 2018

1. Summary

On 21 March, Kosovo law enforcement authorities, together with Europol and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), supported a Slovenia-led operation to apprehend migrant smugglers as part of a cross-border operation aimed at dismantling an organized crime group on the Balkan route.

Challenges to the efficiency of the court system still remain, in particular instantaneous adjournments of court hearings or late commencements and unduly prolonged sessions.

Political interference and preferential treatment in the Kosovo Correctional Service for a number of high-profile prisoners remain concerning. This includes hospitalizations of high-profile prisoners not in compliance with the Service's escort regulations.

2. Activities of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo

2.1. Executive

Organized crime and corruption

On 1 February, a panel of one local judge and two EULEX judges at the Pristina Basic Court rendered its judgment against a defendant and found him guilty of one count of drug trafficking. The defendant received a prison sentence of six years. At the same hearing, the defendant was acquitted of eight other charges linked to drug trafficking, including organized crime. He was also acquitted of murder charges owing to a lack of evidence.

On 14 March, a panel of one local judge and two EULEX judges at the Mitrovica Basic Court announced its verdict in a criminal case against two defendants and found them guilty of smuggling migrants. One was sentenced to four years' imprisonment and the other to two years and three months' imprisonment.

On 21 March, Kosovo law enforcement authorities, together with Europol and EULEX, supported a Slovenia-led operation to apprehend 12 migrant smugglers as part of a cross-border operation aimed at dismantling an organized crime group involved in the smuggling of migrants from Kosovo to Slovenia via the Balkan route.

On 29 March, a panel of EULEX judges at the Mitrovica Basic Court acquitted a defendant charged with organized crime and unauthorized purchase, possession, distribution and sale of dangerous narcotics.

War crimes

Following the assassination on 16 January outside his office in Mitrovica of the only defendant in a war crime case, the trial against him was terminated.

The main trials continued in the war crime cases "Vukotić I" and "Vukotić II". In addition, the war crime case "Vukotić III" is at the Court of Appeals further to an appeal against the ruling on the indictment.

Handover of cases and case files

EULEX continued to hand over cases, case files and evidence to Kosovo institutions. EULEX prosecutors handed over cases and case files to the EULEX Special Prosecution Office of Kosovo and the Basic Prosecution Office of Mitrovica. Meanwhile, EULEX judges continued to transfer cases to local counterparts.

Institute of Forensic Medicine

EULEX forensic experts identified the remains of one missing person. In addition, they handed over 2 individual and 13 sets of remains to the respective families.

Two Kosovo forensic doctors successfully completed an advanced course in forensic anthropology provided by the University of Leicester and have continued, in parallel, with their on-the-job training in forensic anthropology.

Property rights

The Kosovo Property Agency Appeals Panel adjudicated 34 cases, with 183 pending (17 of which are being translated). The Special Chamber of the Supreme Court for privatization matters rendered 2,471 decisions in first-instance trial panel cases and finalized 539 cases at the appellate panel level. A total of 21,329 cases are pending before the Special Chamber of the Supreme Court.

2.2. Strengthening

Case monitoring

Challenges to the efficiency of the court system remain, including immediate adjournments of court hearings, late commencement and unduly prolonged sessions, often resulting in unproductive hearings. This is due mainly to the frequent rotation of prosecutors and unexpected reassignment of judges.

Following the assassination of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović on 16 January, EULEX monitored the situation and liaised with relevant counterparts. On 26 February, EULEX monitored a joint coordination meeting at the Basic Prosecution Office of Mitrovica, attended by both Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian prosecutors and the police investigation teams. On 7 March, at the request of the Chief Prosecutor, the Ivanović case was transferred to the Special Prosecution Office of Kosovo, owing to the complexity of the case. On 13 March, EULEX facilitated a first information-sharing meeting on the investigation between representatives of the Kosovo and Serbian police at Gate 3 on the Administrative Boundary Line.

Following the arrest of Marko Đurić on 26 March, EULEX, at the request of Kosovo Police, activated its role as second security responder and patrolled relevant areas in northern Kosovo.

Judiciary

Notable challenges remain with regard to the selection processes for senior positions in the judiciary. EULEX monitored the reselection process for the positions of presidents of the Supreme Court and of the Court of Appeals after the original process was challenged before the Constitutional Court, as well as the selection process for five presidents of basic courts and supervisory judges of court branches. Additional efforts are needed for these recruitment processes to be implemented in an unbiased and transparent manner, with strict adherence to the rules of procedure and fair and equal treatment of all candidates.

The selection processes for 21 prosecutors and 39 legal officers in the prosecutorial system were positively assessed, in line with the applicable rules and regulations, demonstrating the extraordinary commitment of the selection commission to complete its work efficiently and within extremely tight timelines.

Of the 2016 package of laws, only two regulations remain to be adopted by the Kosovo Judicial Council: the regulation on lay judges and the regulation on professional associates. These have, however, been put on hold until the adoption of amendments to the Law on Courts and the Law on the Kosovo Judicial Council. Once adopted, all previously adopted regulations need to be reviewed again to reflect any related changes.

Kosovo Correctional Service

Political interference in the Kosovo Correctional Service and preferential treatment of a select group of high-profile prisoners remain issues of concern. Since February 2018, EULEX has noted an increase in the number of hospitalizations of high-profile prisoners, coupled with a continued lack of full compliance with Kosovo Correctional Service escort regulations, in particular concerning prisoners from Dubrava Correctional Centre.

In response, EULEX prepared a report for the Dubrava Correctional Centre privileges panel with several recommendations to enhance its functioning. It also recommended to the Kosovo Correctional Service and the Conditional Release Panel that they ensure that, in line with the legal requirements, all prisoners receive a written response within three days to their requests for information concerning a Conditional Release Panel ruling. EULEX had received continual complaints from Dubrava Correctional Centre prisoners that the Conditional Release Panel did not provide information in case of denial of their requests, thereby depriving them of the option of a review of their cases.

The vacancy for the position of Director General of the Kosovo Correctional Service was opened again in December 2017/January 2018, after the previous selection process was cancelled in July 2017. From the 11 applications received, 5 candidates were shortlisted and invited for interview. The process was steered by the co-implementing partner of the project of the Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for assistance in recruiting senior officials in Kosovo institutions, and monitored by EULEX, resulting in three candidates being proposed to the Minister of Justice for final presentation of one candidate to the government.

The Kosovo Correctional Service continues to suffer from infrastructure, staffing and management weaknesses. Since January, staff and management at Lipjan Correctional Centre have failed to take adequate measures to ensure the safety and security of juveniles in their custody, who have set cells on fire, vandalized premises and committed self-harm. Contraband, mainly cell phones and related equipment, in particular in Dubrava Correctional Centre, remains a problem, and the increasing quantity of narcotics recently being found, with all its side effects, is highly concerning and requires immediate action.

Kosovo Police

In an effort to improve its ethnic and gender balance, of the 270 vacant positions to be filled in the recruitment drive taking place in the second quarter of 2018, the Kosovo Police is considering assigning 30 per cent to female officers. While public support for an increase in female representation in the police and the use of a quota are encouraging, additional affirmative action is needed to support this initiative. The affirmative action taken by the Kosovo Police to encourage serving officers from

minorities to apply for the Special Operations Unit Pristina-Mitrovica was a positive development; however, to date, there were insufficient applicants.

Police Inspectorate of Kosovo

EULEX also observed with concern the ongoing undue interference and reported pressure within and outside the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo and the Kosovo Police Economic Crime Unit. On 5 March, the Pristina Basic Court annulled as unlawful the selection process for 17 investigator and inspector positions at the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo. Previous successful candidates had filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Police Inspectorate of Kosovo. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has appealed the decision.

Forensics

On 2 March, EULEX, in partnership with UN-Women, facilitated the first in a series of working-level meetings with representatives of the Kosovo Police, the Office of the Chief Prosecutor, the Institute of Forensic Medicine and the Kosovo Forensic Agency. The aim of the meetings is to support and strengthen cooperation among all partner agencies on the identification, acquisition, analysis and presentation of forensic evidence in investigations into sexual and gender-based violence, including through the development of cross-institutional standard operating procedure.

European Union-facilitated dialogue

EULEX continued to advise Pristina and Belgrade, at the appropriate level, and to facilitate integrated border management meetings. In addition, EULEX has been called upon to facilitate and to undertake follow-up enquiries on issues related to the implementation of the integrated border management technical protocol. Finally, after nine months of inactivity, the Minister of Internal Affairs assumed the role of new Integrated Border Management National Coordinator, promising a revitalization of the implementation of the integrated border management action plan and the development of the Centre for Border Management. However, the Minister resigned in April.

As regards the permanent common crossing points to be opened by Pristina, construction work is ongoing at Merdarë/Merdare and Mutivodë/Mutivode. No progress has been made at the common crossing point of Bërnjak/Tabalije and at the three permanent common crossing points to be opened by Belgrade.

As regards the technical-level implementation of the freedom of movement agreement of 2011, an expert-level meeting between the Belgrade and Pristina teams was held in Brussels from 19 to 21 March under the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue. The meeting provided a good opportunity for the Pristina team to present its progress to date. However, challenges remain regarding the implementation of the final arrangements, as agreed in September 2016. These concern, inter alia, the implementation of the sticker regime, the registration process for vehicles in northern Kosovo, insurance bureaus based on the insurance agreement and the recognition of civil status documents issued by parallel structures.

On 16 March, following the advice of EULEX, the Ministry of Internal Affairs signed an administrative instruction on registration of vehicles with KS licence plates including two related decisions. One decision allowed for the continuation of the process of exchanging temporary licence plates with the letters RP for plates with the letters KS or RKS, which had closed in August 2017, despite 610 remaining vehicles with temporary RP plates. The other decision guaranteed tax exemption for the registration of vehicles with KS or RKS plates, for vehicle owners in possession of Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) or similar plates.

Regarding the integration of the 39 remaining former Serbian interior ministry administrative staff into municipal civil status offices in northern Kosovo, the Kosovo government approved a decision on funding for additional staffing. Once the decision has been approved by the Minister of Finance, the Kosovo Ministry of Local Government Administration can proceed with the recruitment process.

Capacity-building activities

In order to strengthen the investigation and prosecution of crimes relating to sexual abuse and domestic violence in Kosovo, EULEX, together with the Kosovo Police and the Embassy of the United States, organized a training session on forensic and interviewing techniques for approximately 50 Kosovo Police investigators.

EULEX also held a training workshop on intelligence-led policing and strategic planning for Kosovo Police. The training focused on the integration of intelligence-led policing into Kosovo Police policies, procedures and activities at the managerial level.

EULEX, together with the Kosovo Academy of Justice and with the involvement of international experts, organized two training courses for Kosovo prosecutors and prosecution officials. The first, on international criminal law tools for investigating and prosecuting war crimes under the jurisdiction of Kosovo, was aimed at enhancing the capacity of Kosovo prosecutors to investigate and prosecute war crimes cases by applying the legal tools of international criminal law. The second, on media communication, was aimed at increasing the capacity of Kosovo prosecutors in communication with media and handling of sensitive cases.

3. Other key issues

Nothing significant to report.

Annex II

Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office

On 14 March 2018, further to a rigorous assessment of all candidates, 40 lawyers were admitted to the lists of Specialist Defence Counsel and Victims' Counsel. The response to the opening of the lists has been positive; the application process remains open, and the Specialist Chambers continues to receive applications.

In furtherance of its mandate to ensure the rights of accused, victims and others appearing before the court, the Specialist Chambers has continued to focus on bolstering its accountability systems by adopting a code of professional ethics for interpreters and translators on 13 March, continuing its work on a code of professional conduct for counsel, and finalizing legal aid regulations, in line with best practices for the provision of legal assistance to accused and victims.

On 15 and 16 March, Specialist Chambers' judges convened in The Hague for their third plenary. During the plenary, the judges were given informative presentations and had discussions with units of the Registry directly supporting and assisting judicial proceedings. The judges were also informed about all activities performed by the Registry throughout the previous year and discussed milestones ahead. Following discussions at the plenary, the President assigned a group of three judges to identify topics relevant for the effectiveness and efficiency of future proceedings. A judge of the Specialist Chamber of the Constitutional Court was also assigned to identify case law of the Kosovo Constitutional Court and of the European Court of Human Rights, where applicable, relevant to the future work of the Specialist Chambers.

The Specialist Chambers continues to engage in close collaboration with the host State in order to facilitate its work, including in relation to the renovation of the future premises of the Court in The Hague. On 25 January, the Registrar met with the Ambassador for International Organizations of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and on 29 March and 11 April the Deputy Registrar participated in steering committee meetings regarding the renovations of the premises.

The Specialist Chambers continues to prioritize its outreach activities to ensure that its mandate is understood and to foster direct communications with affected communities. In January, a grant agreement was signed with the Government of Switzerland to increase the outreach activities of the Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office in Kosovo over two years, enabling the Specialist Chambers to expand upon its outreach work and add to originally planned activities.

From 5 to 8 February, the Specialist Chambers held consultations with civil society in Kosovo on future outreach activities. On 6 February, the Head of the Defence Office and the Head of the Victims Participation Office met with members of the Kosovo Bar Association in order to provide technical information on applications and admissions to the list of counsel. In March, the Specialist Chambers Head of Public Information and Communication Unit and the Head of the Victims Participation Office held meetings on outreach activities with 115 representatives of women's groups from the Kosovo Women's Network and with members of civil society in North Mitrovica.

On 21 March, the Deputy Registrar, in cooperation with the nongovernmental organization the Humanitarian Law Centre, held a panel discussion in Pristina, at which representatives of the Specialist Chambers briefed non-governmental organizations, lawyers and members of the diplomatic community on the mandate and structure of the Chambers. In February and March, representatives of the Specialist Chambers also held numerous individual meetings with representatives of civil

society, journalists, international organizations and diplomatic representatives in Pristina; and the Specialist Chambers continues to host group visits through its visitors' programme.

The Specialist Chambers further reinforced its communications with European Union and international partners. On 29 January, the Registrar and Chef de Cabinet of the President briefed delegates of the European Union Council Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management on the activities of the Registry and Chambers. On 19 March, the European Parliament Rapporteur for Kosovo, Igor Šoltes, met with the principals of the Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office in The Hague. On 21 March, the Specialist Chambers hosted a visit by the European Council Working Party on the Western Balkans Region. The Specialist Chambers' engagement with individual European Union Member States, third contributing States and other states remains ongoing, and is highly focused on garnering support for cooperation on witness protection and enforcement of sentences.

In accordance with its mandate as set out in the special law adopted by the Kosovo Assembly in August 2015, the Specialist Prosecutor's Office has continued the investigation into the allegations contained in the report of January 2011 of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly entitled "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs", which it took over from the Special Investigative Task Force in September 2016. In recent months, the Specialist Prosecutor's Office has also been carrying out a systematic review of all evidential holdings, in compliance with requirements under the Rules of Procedure and Evidence.

David Schwendiman, who was appointed Specialist Prosecutor in September 2016, stepped down on 31 March 2018, when his fixed-term appointment as a Senior Foreign Service Officer in the United States State Department came to an end. Since Mr. Schwendiman's departure, Kwai Hong Ip, the Deputy Specialist Prosecutor, has been serving as Acting Specialist Prosecutor with the same authorities as the Specialist Prosecutor, and there has been no interruption in the work of the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. The special law gives the Specialist Prosecutor, among other things, the authority to call upon Kosovo institutions to assist him. When it has been in the interest of the investigation, assistance has been requested and that assistance has been provided to date. The Specialist Prosecutor will continue to seek assistance from any person and any institution, domestic or international, to advance the investigation and to ensure that it is done objectively, professionally, impartially, thoroughly and well. Assistance from authorities in Belgrade and Pristina, as well as from the European Union and the wider international community, is essential. The Specialist Prosecutor's Office requires the continued engagement and full support of the international community, international organizations and individual states in all its activities.

Annex III

Composition and strength of the police component of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

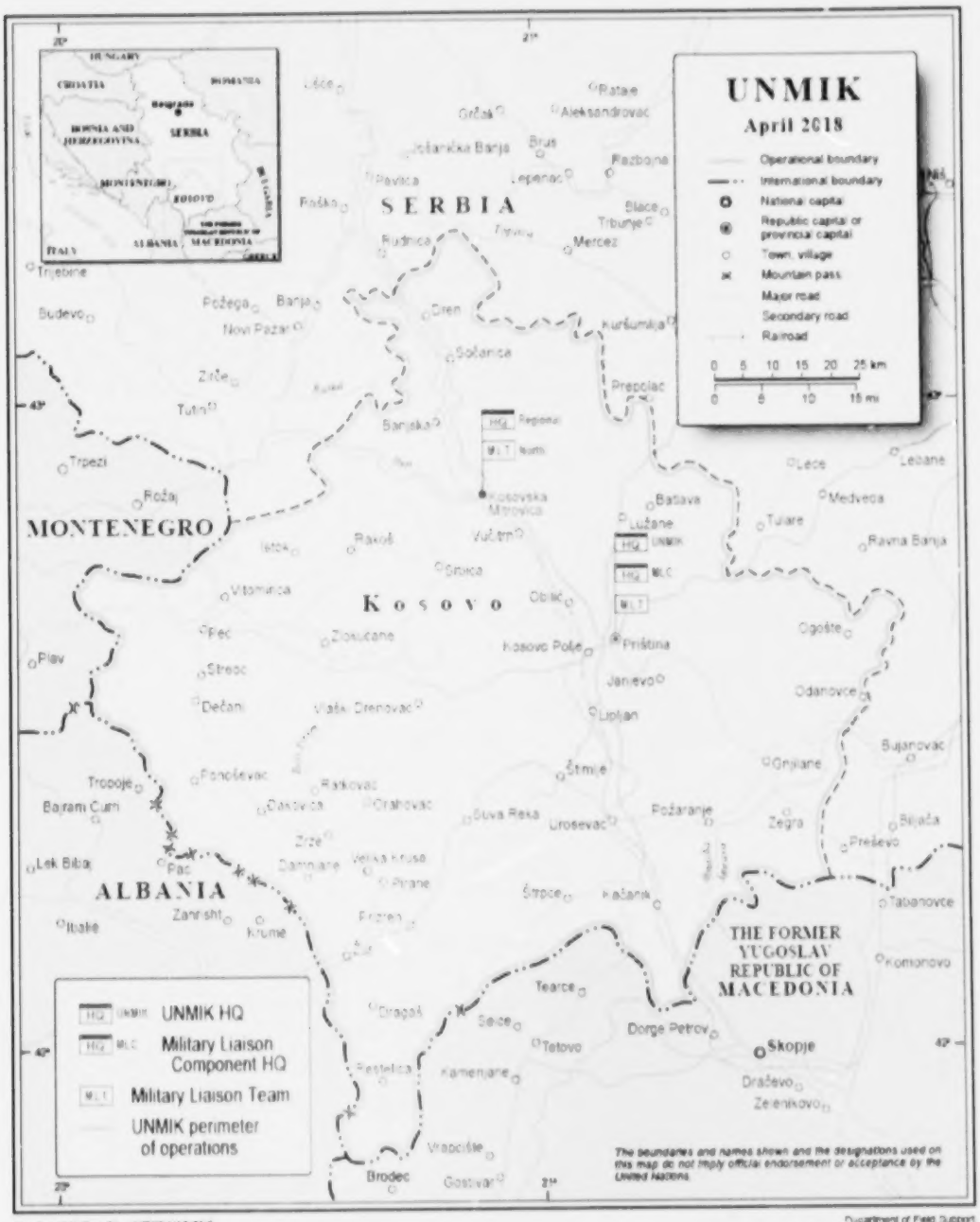
(as at 15 April 2018)

Country	*Number*
Austria	1
Bulgaria	1
Finland	1
Germany	2
Hungary	1
Russian Federation	2
Turkey	1
Total	**9**

Composition and strength of the military liaison component of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

(as at 15 April 2018)

Country	*Number*
Czechia	2
Poland	1
Republic of Moldova	1
Romania	1
Turkey	1
Ukraine	2
Total	**8**



Map No. 4133 Rev. 74 UNITED NATIONS
April 2018 (Colour)

Department of Field Support
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)

United Nations S/2018/408

Security Council

Distr.: General
1 May 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 1 May 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the fifty-fifth monthly report of the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The present letter covers the period from 24 March to 23 April 2018.

Arrangements are continuing for assisting the Syrian Arab Republic in the destruction of the remaining two chemical weapons production facilities, of the 27 declared in total. I take note that these arrangements are expected to be finalized in the coming weeks, with destruction operations taking a further two to three months, assuming security conditions permit.

With regard to the declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic, I note that while some information received by OPCW from the Syrian Arab Republic has partially addressed the questions raised, other questions regrettably remain unanswered. The ongoing inability to resolve these outstanding issues remains a source of very deep concern. I continue to urge the Syrian Arab Republic to extend its full cooperation to OPCW in this regard.

Following the profoundly alarming allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Douma (Eastern Ghouta), an OPCW fact-finding mission team deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic to visit the relevant sites. As the Director-General states in his note (see annex), the team entered Douma on 21 April 2018 and visited one of the sites. During this visit, it collected samples and then returned to Damascus. I note that the mission is continuing to study all available information relating to this and other allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. In this regard, I express my confidence in the integrity and expertise of the OPCW fact-finding mission and reaffirm my support for the OPCW.

The seriousness of these most recent allegations has further underlined the need for a dedicated, impartial, objective and independent mechanism for attributing responsibility with regard to the use of chemical weapons. I call upon the Security Council to continue to work towards this end.

Impunity and the absence of international consensus on accountability are escalating the conflict. As I have stated previously, any confirmed use of chemical weapons by any party to the conflict is abhorrent, reprehensible and a clear violation of international law. The identification of those responsible is a necessary step towards holding them to account. In failing to discharge our collective responsibility in this regard, we fail the victims of chemical weapons attacks. Impunity cannot prevail.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

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Annex to the letter dated 1 May 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of the OPCW Executive Council Decision EC-M-33/DEC.1, and the United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council. My report covers the period from 24 March 2018 to 23 April 2018 and also covers the reporting requirements of the Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

Note by the Director-General

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

Background

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015) noting the Director-General's intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria, along with information on the Council's discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled "Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director General's intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.

4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled "OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall "regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1".

5. This, the fifty-fifth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 24 March 2018 to 23 April 2018.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

6. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) The Secretariat has verified the destruction of 25 of the 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. As previously reported, in November 2017 the Secretariat conducted an initial inspection

of the last two stationary above-ground facilities in accordance with paragraph 44 of Part V of the Verification Annex to the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter "the Convention"). Thanks to the voluntary contributions provided by States Parties to the Syria Trust Fund for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons, including contributions provided in response to the Secretariat's Note S/1541/2017 (dated 9 October 2017), the Secretariat, together with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), has been making all the required arrangements to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in the destruction of the facilities located at these two sites. The remaining required arrangements are expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. Once the arrangements are in place, destruction operations are expected to take two to three months, subject to security conditions.

(b) On 17 April 2018, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its fifty third monthly report (EC-88/P/NAT.2, dated 18 April 2018) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC M 34/DEC.1.

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

7. As stated in previous reports, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have now been destroyed.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5

8. During the reporting period, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continued its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-81/DEC.4 and paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5. On 29 January 2018, the Director General addressed a letter to the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, Dr Faisal Mekdad, in which he asked for further clarifications regarding activities conducted at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC), and attached to his letter a non-exhaustive list of questions.

9. Through a note verbale dated 19 February 2018, the Syrian Arab Republic provided answers to the SSRC-related questions raised in the Director-General's letter of 29 January 2018. The DAT assessed these answers and determined that while they partially addressed some of the questions, other questions remained unanswered. The DAT's assessment of the responses provided by the Syrian Arab Republic was reported in a Note by the Director General entitled, "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team" (EC 87/HP/DG.1, dated 2 March 2018).

10. In a letter to Deputy Minister Mekdad dated 10 April 2018, the Director-General referred to this report and reiterated that unanswered questions remain and require a response. An updated non-exhaustive list of questions, including follow-up questions arising from the answers provided in the 19 February 2018 note verbale, was attached to the Director-General's letter.

11. The Director-General also repeated his request to the Syrian authorities to provide all necessary information that would assist in clarifying the remaining issues associated with the declarations and further submissions of the Syrian Arab Republic. Additionally, the Director-General restated that the Secretariat will continue to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in resolving these issues in a manner consistent with the Convention and relevant Council decisions.

Other activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

12. UNOPS continues to provide support to the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement.

13. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Supplementary resources

14. As previously reported, the Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the OPCW FFM and other remaining activities, such as those of the DAT. As at the cut-off date of this report, total contributions to this fund stood at EUR 17.1 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Monaco, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

15. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 23 November 2015), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), the FFM continued to study all available information relating to the allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

16. Regarding allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Douma on 7 April, the FFM team deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic in mid-April to visit the relevant sites. Security for these sites is under the control of the Military Police of the Russian Federation. To facilitate the FFM's deployment to Douma, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) made arrangements for the Syrian Arab Republic to escort the FFM team to a rendezvous point, after which the security would be provided by the Military Police of the Russian Federation.

17. To further assure the safety of the FFM team in Douma, on 17 April UNDSS conducted a reconnaissance mission to two sites to assess their safety for the FFM deployment. On arrival at Site 1, a large crowd gathered and the reconnaissance team withdrew on the advice of UNDSS. At Site 2, the UNDSS team came under small arms fire and an explosive was detonated, after which the reconnaissance team left Douma to return to Damascus. FFM team members did not participate in this mission, and their deployment to Douma was subsequently postponed pending improvement of the security situation.

18. On 20 April, the UNDSS team conducted another reconnaissance mission to Douma. No incidents occurred and UNDSS determined that conditions were sufficiently secure for the FFM team to deploy. The FFM team entered Douma on 21 April, visited one of the sites, collected samples, and returned safely to Damascus the same day.

Conclusion

19. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the activities of the FFM and on the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues, as well as on the verification of the destruction of the two stationary above-ground facilities, and annual inspections of the underground structures already verified as destroyed.

United Nations S/2018/409

Security Council

Distr.: General
2 May 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 1 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith an information bulletin dated 1 May 2018 from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

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Annex to the letter dated 1 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (1 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported two incidents of gunfire in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported six incidents of gunfire: three in Homs Governorate and three in Idlib Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

Three United Nations humanitarian convoys were assured passage:

1. One to Jizah in Dar'a Governorate (total cargo weight 45 tons);
2. One to Dar'a Governorate (total cargo weight 84 tons);
3. One to Dar'a Governorate (45 tons).

In total, 1,797 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,543.36 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 35 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 79,210 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,509.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/410

Security Council

Distr.: General
2 May 2018

Original: English

Identical letters dated 1 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Following the previous letters I have addressed to you regarding the repeated and continuing terrorist attacks committed by armed terrorist groups against civilians in the city of Damascus and its suburbs, and upon instructions from my Government, I would like to inform you that on 25, 27 and 28 April 2018, those terrorist groups targeted the residential neighbourhoods in Damascus with 13 rocket-propelled grenades, killing one civilian and wounding eight others, in addition to causing serious damage to public and private property and infrastructure.

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-06977 (E) 020518

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United Nations S/2018/411

Security Council

Distr.: General
2 May 2018

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Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia

I. Introduction

1. The present report, which is submitted pursuant to paragraph 55 of Security Council resolution 2372 (2017) and paragraph 28 of resolution 2408 (2018), provides information about the implementation of both resolutions, including with regard to the mandates of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). The report covers major developments in Somalia from 21 December 2017 to 24 April 2018.

II. Political, security and economic overview

A. Political developments

2. The reporting period was dominated by a political crisis resulting from a no-confidence motion against the Speaker of the House of the People (lower house), which created tensions between the executive branch and the Federal Parliament, sharply divided parliamentarians and slowed federal legislative activity and efforts to act on other political priorities. The crisis also led to the mobilization of Somali security forces and irregular forces and to a renewal of inter-clan tensions, thereby increasing the risk of an armed confrontation in Mogadishu.

3. As the Federal Parliament returned from its four-month recess, a motion of no confidence was filed against the Speaker of the House of the People, Mohamed Osman Jawari, on 14 March. That triggered a sharp rise in political tensions that had been building up since attempts by the Federal Government to arrest and remove sitting parliamentarians in 2017. The campaign against the Speaker resulted in a deadlock between two groups of parliamentarians, amid allegations that the motion was orchestrated by the leadership of the Federal Government to pre-empt a plan by opposition parliamentarians to unseat the Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Khaire. Mediation efforts, including through an ad hoc, seven-member committee in the Upper House, failed to resolve the crisis. Militias said to be aligned with the two opposing sides were reportedly mobilized in the city throughout the crisis. On 8 April, Mr. Jawari resigned as Speaker, stating his desire to avoid further escalation.

4. The crisis distracted the Federal Government and the federal member states from carrying out preparatory work for the elections due to be held in 2020–2021, deepening federalism, reforming the security sector and moving the constitutional review process forward. The National Security Council, made up of leaders of the

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Federal Government and federal member states, met from 6 to 10 February in order to reach agreement on financial and operational support for the regional forces, which would be integrated into the state police force. They also agreed to form a technical committee to develop proposals on power-sharing, resource management, allocation of revenues and an electoral model, to be considered at the next meeting of the Council, on 28 March in Baidoa. However, that meeting was postponed indefinitely, owing to the political stalemate in Mogadishu.

5. The President of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, conducted a visit from 7 to 24 January to Puntland and Galmudug, his first to those states, where he received a warm reception. To show his personal commitment to local reconciliation efforts between the two states, the President travelled by road from Garoowe to Gaalkacyo.

6. During his visit, the President attended a ceremony in Dhuusamarreeb on 18 January to mark the formation of a united Galmudug administration, the result of a power-sharing agreement between the Galmudug Interim Administration and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a, which the two parties signed in Mogadishu on 6 December 2017. The transfer of government functions from Cadaado to the constitutional state capital of Dhuusamarreeb has started. Preparations are under way to form a committee to work out the modalities for integrating members of Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a into the Galmudug regional forces. A committee established in February to amalgamate the two constitutions presented a draft harmonized constitution that is pending the approval of the state assembly. However, on 11 April, an unresolved dispute over the number of seats in a united state assembly and their distribution by clan prompted the Saleebaan traditional and community leaders based in Cadaado to declare their withdrawal from Galmudug.

7. In South-West State, the process of forming a district council continued. The Berdaale district council, which includes two female members, was inaugurated on 24 January. In Baidoa, neither of the two bodies responsible for managing the process of forming a district council has been set up. The lack of transparency has increased inter-clan tensions over power-sharing in Baidoa. In Baraawe, inter-communal differences over the allocation of seats have held up the formal launch of its district council formation process.

8. On 21 January, the President removed the then Governor of Banadir and Mayor of Mogadishu, Thabit Abdi Mohamed. That decision followed tensions that had arisen between him and the Federal Government over the selling or allocation of public lands in Mogadishu, responsibility for security in the capital and the status of Banadir and Mogadishu. The Minister of Information, Abdirahman Omar Osman "Yarisow", was appointed as the new Mayor.

9. Tensions flared up between "Somaliland" and Puntland during the reporting period. On 8 January, "Somaliland" forces took control of Tukaraq in the disputed Sool region, ejecting Puntland security and customs personnel. The move came shortly after the visit by a federal minister to Badhan in the disputed Sanaag region and the visit by the President of Somalia to Garoowe a day before. "Somaliland" has declared its intention to increase development support for Tukaraq and maintain its security presence. The President of Puntland, Abdiweli Mohamed Ali "Gaas", is under local political pressure to respond. Meanwhile, pro-"Somaliland" officials of Khatumo State are demanding that the new administration of the latter expedite the implementation of the peace agreement that it signed with "Somaliland" in October 2017.

10. On 1 March, "Somaliland" signed a tripartite agreement with Ethiopia and a private company based in Dubai on the management of Berbera port. The lower house of the Federal Parliament subsequently declared the agreement null and void and

banned the company from operating in Somalia, a move that has been rejected by "Somaliland". On 14 March, the President of "Somaliland" met the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi. They agreed that the United Arab Emirates would support training of "Somaliland" security forces and that the construction of the military airbase and naval base in Berbera would proceed as planned.

B. Security developments

11. The overall security situation remains volatile. In Mogadishu, following a brief lull in January, when mostly small improvised explosive device attacks and targeted assassinations were reported, an estimated 18 people died and 20 were injured on 23 February in twin suicide car bombings. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attacks, which bore the hallmarks of that group's method over the past two years of carrying out smaller attacks followed by a larger assault. In addition, the arrest of government officials by the Somali security forces in Mogadishu has resulted in clan protests and demonstrations. The number of targeted assassinations claimed by Al-Shabaab continued to increase.

12. On 2 March, Al-Shabaab carried out three separate complex attacks on the outskirts of Mogadishu. A Somali national army training camp was targeted in Afgooye, Shabelle Hoose, 25 km north-west of Mogadishu. A second attack occurred in Balcad, 30 km north of Mogadishu in Shabelle Dhexe. The third attack was also carried out near Balcad, targeting a convoy of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) escorted by 75 Burundian troops.

13. In Puntland, Al-Shabaab attacks on Somali security forces continued in and near Boosaaso and the Galgalo mountains. On 7 February, two civilians were killed and four police officers injured in an improvised explosive device and complex attack by Al-Shabaab in Boosaaso at a police station near the port. Al-Shabaab and pro-Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) elements were killed in air strikes in February. Clashes between pro-ISIL fighters and the Somali security forces and local militias have also been reported. The latest incident occurred on 24 February in the Dacar area.

14. Air strikes, including by the United States Air Force, have become an integral component of the offensive against Al-Shabaab strongholds and hideouts in southern and central Somalia and Jubaland and against pro-ISIL elements and Al-Shabaab in Puntland. The air strikes were concentrated in southerly central and southern regions, largely owing to the high level of Al-Shabaab activity there. Twenty air strikes were carried out in the first quarter of 2018, compared with none in the same period in 2017. Since April 2017, air strikes have continued unabated and increased in number; 24 such strikes were carried out in the last quarter of 2017.

15. Clan violence continued. In Sanaag, in Ceel Afweyn district, 20 people were killed and 30 injured in clashes between clans. A curfew was imposed and troops and police officers were deployed in the area. Clashes among members of the Somali security forces, reported mainly in Mogadishu and Shabelle Hoose, also continued.

16. On 24 February, eight armed pirates attempted to hijack a Singapore-flagged tanker in the Gulf of Aden between Caluula and Yemen but were repelled by guards aboard the vessel. The vessel and crew were reported safe. That area witnessed three piracy attempts in 2017. No major incidents of civil unrest were reported during the reporting period. On 1 April, Al-Shabaab carried out vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and complex attacks at two AMISOM bases, at Mareer and Golweyn settlements in Shabelle Hoose. Four soldiers and 30 militants were killed.

C. Economic developments

17. The economy continued to grow, although not robustly enough to improve the lives of average Somalis. Key economic figures for 2017 were released during the reporting period. Real gross domestic product growth weakened to 1.8 per cent in 2017 from 2.4 per cent in 2016, following severe drought in the first half of 2017, which led to large-scale food insecurity affecting more than 6 million people.

18. The drought fuelled inflation, which rose from 1.3 per cent in 2016 to 5.2 per cent in 2017, bringing with it rises in food prices. Crop prices increased significantly, affecting household purchasing power. A steady inflow of remittances and donor finance kept the exchange rate stable in 2017 (23.605 Somali shillings to $1). The private sector could play a key role in supporting growth and creating employment, in particular for young people, which in turn could reduce insecurity. The country's business environment, however, remains structurally weak. Somalia ranked lowest in almost all key pillars of the World Bank "Doing Business" survey results published on 31 October 2017.

19. The ability of the Federal Government to implement its fiscal policy has improved significantly. Domestic revenue collection was at 103.2 per cent of the budget target for 2017. Donor grants recorded a significantly improved performance in 2017, with 85 per cent of commitments met, compared with 50 per cent in 2016. Total revenue in 2018 is projected at $274.6 million.

20. At its meeting on 21 February, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) welcomed the considerable progress made by Somalia under its staff-monitored programme and reaffirmed its commitment to help Somalia to reach a heavily indebted poor country decision point as soon as feasible. The World Bank and the Fund continue to provide the technical support needed to promote economic reform and help the Federal Government to establish a track record of improved fiscal discipline and performance, while the United Nations continues to promote political stability, reconciliation, strengthened rule of law and meaningful measures to tackle corruption. At the High-level Roundtable on Somalia, which was held on 19 April on the margins of the 2018 Spring Meetings of the World Bank and IMF, it was acknowledged that significant progress had been made, opening the path to a pre-arrears clearance grant. Progress on the economic and political fronts is critical to restoring creditor confidence ahead of an eventual decision point.

21. Growth in public expenditure kept pace with revenue, increasing by 42.9 per cent in 2017 to $243.7 million. Nonetheless, the Federal Government still faces fiscal challenges. Current spending priorities focus on the security and administrative services, which account for almost 90 per cent of total spending, crowding out provision for economic and social services.

22. Although famine was averted in 2017, it remains a looming risk throughout Somalia. The drought in 2017 resulted in crop production failures and losses in livestock and livestock-related products, estimated at $1.7 billion, between November 2016 and June 2017. The country has embarked on a medium-term and long-term strategy to address drought and famine risks based on the drought impact and needs assessment exercise conducted in January 2018.

III. Support for peacebuilding and State-building efforts

A. Establishment of a functional federal State

1. Deepening federalism

23. At the National Security Council meeting held from 6 to 10 February, the Federal Government, federal member states and the Banadir regional administration signed an interim agreement on sharing revenues collected from fishing licences. Under the agreement, the Federal Government is responsible for issuing licences for fishing 24 nautical miles or more from the coastline in the exclusive economic zone, while the federal member states issue licences for fishing within 24 nautical miles of the coastline. The agreement also provides for depositing revenue generated from the issuance of licences in a special account at the Central Bank of Somalia. The agreement was an important step towards a more comprehensive agreement on revenue generation and resource sharing, while more broadly demonstrating the mutual benefits of compromise for the Federal Government and the federal member states. In order to build on that progress, the 10-member Federal Government and federal member state technical committee established by the Council in February has prepared proposals regarding the distribution of powers between the Federal Government and federal member states, resource management and revenue sharing, which are expected to be adopted at the next meeting of the Council.

2. Constitutional review

24. On 18 January 2018, the Council of Ministers of the Federal Government endorsed a political road map for inclusive politics for the period 2017–2020. The road map contains milestones and timelines for key political processes that should be completed by 2020, paving the way for elections by universal suffrage in 2020–2021. It was adopted after a series of consultations held by the constitutionally mandated bodies with leaders of the federal member states and their regional assemblies. A draft memorandum of understanding listing the key benchmarks, milestones and expected outcomes of the constitutional review process was also drawn up.

25. A meeting bringing together representatives of the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, the National Independent Electoral Commission and the Boundaries and Federation Commission was held in Mogadishu on 22 and 23 January 2018. The participants reaffirmed their commitment to cooperating on the constitutional review process. On 22 December 2017, the Forum of the Ministries of Constitutional Affairs adopted a joint strategy for civil society engagement in the review, which identifies several avenues for the dissemination of information, public engagement and civic education. On 15 and 16 March, the Forum agreed that the national constitutional convention should be held in April. Differences between the implementing bodies over control of the budget and the division of responsibilities, however, have delayed the convention. Although intervention by the President of Somalia resulted in a memorandum of understanding clarifying the division of responsibilities, differences remain.

3. Prevention and resolution of conflicts

26. To consolidate peace and improve security in Gaalkacyo following the removal of roadblocks and normalization of traffic through the town on 16 December, a Somali national army force drawn from two divisions based in Puntland and Galmudug has been deployed to serve as a deterrent. The Gaalkacyo joint police, consisting of 200 officers drawn from both sides, has continued to perform effectively but requires additional support in terms of equipment and further training. Prominent clan elders

from north and south Gaalkacyo have formed a peace committee, under which subcommittees of women, young people and the business community have been established to give them a voice in the local peace process. UNSOM continued to work with the Federal Government, state and local governments and other partners to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting local peace initiatives.

27. During the reporting period, UNSOM continued to support efforts in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In February, the Mission, the Federal Government and the Government of Norway co-hosted a three-day colloquium on peace and reconciliation, bringing together more than 30 national and international experts, as well as government officials, United Nations personnel and representatives of the diplomatic community. The objective was to strengthen a shared understanding of conflict in Somalia and identify practical recommendations for reducing and preventing violence and promoting inclusive and sustainable peace. Input for the national reconciliation framework is being developed by the Federal Government.

28. The new Minister of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, Abdi Mohamed Sabriye, hosted a workshop on national reconciliation in Somalia on 6 and 7 March, during which he emphasized the key role of the Ministry in promoting reconciliation. He underlined the need to realign reconciliation processes with other endeavours aimed at State formation and peacebuilding and expressed his commitment to promoting inclusive and participatory reconciliation processes and strengthening existing coordination mechanisms.

29. On 16 March, the President of Somalia hosted a meeting with key stakeholders from South-West State involved in the reconciliation process to define the way forward on the inter-clan tensions in Marka, Shabelle Hoose. They held an inaugural conference in Mogadishu on 26 March, at which they formally launched the peace process for Marka. They also agreed to establish a committee to work for peace, stabilization and community development. Another conference will be held in Marka at a date to be determined. At a follow-up meeting to the meeting of 16 March, hosted on 20 March by the Ministry of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation and attended by political figures involved in the process, a formula was agreed upon for the representation of the Bimal, Habar Gidir and other sub-clans. Disagreement remained, however, with regard to the role of South-West State authorities in the reconciliation process.

30. On 10 and 11 January, my Special Representative for Somalia visited Hargeysa and met representatives of the "Somaliland" administration and civil society organizations following the "Somaliland" presidential election in 2017. He encouraged all parties to ensure that the parliamentary elections planned for 2019 was held on time and confirmed that the United Nations stood ready to support all parties in the process of dialogue between Somalia and "Somaliland".

4. Support for elections by universal suffrage

31. In the political road map adopted on 18 January, priorities and milestones are set forth for holding multi-party elections by universal suffrage in 2020–2021 within the broader governance framework, including the constitutional review, and for the electoral legal framework and election preparations. Under the road map, it is envisaged that the electoral law will be passed by the end of 2018. A range of options for the country's future system of representation were discussed at a technical-level meeting between representatives of the Federal Government and federal member states. In the road map, it is pointed out that there is a need to establish the modality for voter registration in 2018 and prepare for its nationwide implementation, a process that the National Independent Electoral Commission will launch in 2019.

32. Following the agreement of 5 November 2017 reached in Mogadishu by the Federal Government, federal member states and the Banadir regional administration, the Commission was requested to contact stakeholders throughout Somalia within 90 days in order to discuss the challenges involved in organizing the elections. The Commission, with the support of UNSOM, conducted extensive nationwide consultations in Banadir, Galmudug, HirShabelle, Jubaland, Puntland and South-West State and with members of the diaspora in seven locations in Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America between mid-December 2017 and mid-March 2018. The meetings, which were attended by regional officials, traditional elders, members of political parties, religious leaders and representatives of women's and youth groups and civil society organizations, showed that the Somali public appears to strongly back the idea of multi-party elections by universal suffrage for the next federal electoral cycle, in place of clan-based power-sharing arrangements.

B. Cross-cutting issues

1. Gender equality and women's empowerment

33. UNSOM has developed a strategy to achieve gender parity in the Mission by 2021. On 8 March, United Nations personnel in Somalia and other members of the international community observed International Women's Day around the country, supporting government activities to promote awareness of gender equality and women's empowerment.

34. The appointment of a gender adviser to the National Independent Electoral Commission has strengthened its capacity to pursue its agendas on gender and on women and peace and security, both within the Commission and in electoral processes.

2. Youth empowerment

35. Following the national youth conference, held in December, a nine-member interim national youth council has been established with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). It includes representatives of the federal member states, young persons with disabilities and members of minority clans. On 30 January, the Federal Government, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) launched the Open Innovation Challenge, seeking youth-led solutions for issues facing internally displaced persons in Somalia. On 20 and 21 February, the "Somaliland" Ministry of Youth and Sports and "Somaliland" National Youth Umbrella Organization joined in holding the Kulan Youth Summit in Hargeysa, which drew 600 youth representatives from across "Somaliland" to celebrate "Somaliland" National Youth Day. With support from UNFPA and in collaboration with the ministries of labour, social affairs and education, the Somalia Youth Peer Education Network and various youth non-governmental organizations used theatre-based techniques and participatory drama throughout the reporting period in activities to promote behavioural change with regard to gender-based violence and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, among more than 10,000 young people in and out of school. A new programme on youth-related advocacy efforts involving UNFPA and UN-Habitat has been in place since February 2018.

C. Development coordination

36. In January 2018, the Federal Government presented the results of the drought impact needs assessment at a high-level event in Mogadishu. In the assessment, the drivers and impact of recurrent drought are identified and long-term solutions are outlined for preventing famine as a result of drought. The ongoing humanitarian response remains essential to saving lives, but Somalia and its international partners need to develop strategies that combine sustained humanitarian response with development efforts designed to address the underlying causes of recurrent crises.

37. Underpinning the country's work on long-term recovery and resilience is its national development plan. Somalia has taken important steps to ensure that the plan has effective leadership and to coordinate its implementation. International community partners are working closely to develop and carry out initiatives to address the country's priorities. Development aid continues to increase in Somalia, which received $742 million in 2017.

IV. Comprehensive approach to security

A. International coordination

38. As agreed at the conference on security held in Mogadishu on 5 December 2017, the Federal Government and international partners collaborated on the development of a comprehensive transition plan to assist Somali security institutions in fully assuming their responsibilities. The plan includes provision for: operational activities; institutional development; support for activities relating to stabilization and the prevention and countering of violent extremism; priority geographical areas where transition can be accelerated; and the supporting role to be played by international partners, including the African Union, the European Union and the United States. UNSOM and UNSOS facilitated this collaboration, including by means of information-gathering visits to the federal member states. Key meetings between the Federal Government and international partners held during the reporting period, including on 15 January, 31 January and 11 March, have focused on the transition plan.

B. Comprehensive approach to security strands

Strand 1
Enabling the operations of the African Union Mission in Somalia and enhancing its effectiveness

39. Further progress on strand 1 has yet to materialize. It is expected, however, that the impending work on a conditional transfer of responsibility for security to the Somali security forces will lead to closer cooperation between international partners, institutions of the Federal Government and the federal member states on coordinating support for planned AMISOM operations and efforts to enhance the Mission's effectiveness.

40. As at 1 January, UNSOS was supporting up to 21,626 uniformed AMISOM personnel in accordance with resolution 2372 (2017). Between 26 March and 17 April, AMISOM, aided by UNSOS, deployed a formed police unit of 150 personnel from Sierra Leone to Kismaayo. In addition, UNSOS continued to provide non-lethal support to the 10,900 Somali troops in 20 locations who are in joint operations with AMISOM, as authorized by the Security Council.

41. Because Al-Shabaab controls the Leego forward operating base on the Mogadishu-Baidoa main supply route, UNSOS continued to supply AMISOM and the Somali army in sector 3 by air. UNSOS contracted an additional rotary-wing helicopter from January 2018 to augment its capacity. In January, it began delivering rations to AMISOM troops in Baraawe by sea, pending reconstruction of the local airstrip by the European Union.

42. On 2 March, AMISOM troop-contributing countries attended a summit in Kampala, under the auspices of the President of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, in his capacity as their spokesperson. In their communiqué, they urged the Security Council to reconsider its decision to draw down AMISOM, stating that the troop reductions and time frame under resolution 2372 (2017) were not realistic and would lead to a reversal of the gains made by AMISOM, and requested that previous troop levels be restored to account for the inadequate capacity of the national army. Troop-contributing countries also called upon the United Nations to provide adequate, predictable and sustainable funding from United Nations-assessed contributions to facilitate the implementation by AMISOM of its mandate, including through the provision of the requisite force enablers and multipliers. The troop-contributing countries also requested the African Union and AMISOM leadership, as well as the Federal Government, to submit a realistic transition plan for consideration at the following summit of the troop-contributing countries.

43. The Mine Action Service of the United Nations trained more than 3,000 AMISOM troops during the reporting period in improvised explosive device search capacity and threat mitigation and explosive ordnance disposal. It supported AMISOM in the task of protecting key infrastructure by providing 34 dogs to 17 explosive detection dog teams. The Service also established a threat mitigation cell to improve the coordination of explosive hazard mitigation efforts by AMISOM, the Federal Government, federal member states, the Somali security forces and international partners. On 22 January, the AMISOM Force Commander and the Service launched a training booklet on mitigating the threat of improvised explosive devices, for use by AMISOM troops and police. The booklet, which is available in Amharic, English, French and Somali, contains detailed information about the types of improvised explosive devices and on search training programmes offered by the Service.

44. Kenya joined Ethiopia, Nigeria and Uganda in signing the tripartite memorandum of understanding for the reimbursement of contingent-owned equipment and self-sustainment. The conclusion of the tripartite memorandum with Burundi was initiated and Djibouti has indicated willingness to sign once it finalizes negotiations with the African Union and the United Nations. Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda have lodged claims for reimbursement for equipment lost in hostile action in Somalia. Djibouti deployed additional contingent-owned equipment in January 2018, based on the provisions of the tripartite memorandum of understanding.

45. Since my previous report, the Somali national army trust fund has received $475,645, $347,251 and $4,997,160 from Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom respectively, bringing its current balance to $7,326,728, which can sustain the army approximately until August 2018. The AMISOM trust fund, however, has not received new contributions and currently has an uncommitted balance of $1.8 million.

Strand 2
Strengthening Somali security institutions

46. Strand 2 work continued mainly at the expert level, focusing on support for the national army (strand 2a), the police (strand 2b) and the justice and corrections sector (strand 2c).

47. The decision by the National Security Council at its meeting held between 6 and 10 February to integrate regional forces, such as Darwish, into Somali security institutions will require strong support for policing structures to ensure integration, training and vetting.

48. The implementation of the recommendations contained in the operational readiness assessment of 2017 continued. Differences of opinion between the Ministry of Defence and the incoming national army leadership have delayed the endorsement of a new army structure but there has been progress in integrating 2,400 members of the Puntland defence forces into the national army. UNSOM and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) supported human rights training for those soldiers and their biometric registration during the reporting period. They also supported screening for children, which has resulted in the identification of 17 children among the 2,037 soldiers screened thus far. The registration of the remaining 363 soldiers started on 1 April.

49. As the development of the Somalia federal police plan began, UNSOM provided strategic advice to the joint technical committee created to coordinate the implementation of the new policing model at the state and federal levels. Based on the state police plans developed by each federal member state, the Joint Technical Committee identified a series of policing priorities for 2018, which were subsequently endorsed by the Council of Police Commissioners in February. Donors pledged contributions through the newly established joint police programme to support the implementation of those priorities. On 26 March, UNSOM facilitated a high-level conference held in Hargeysa to develop a phased plan to reform the "Somaliland" police. The meeting followed a similar conference on the justice and corrections sector in January, which demonstrated the commitment of the new administration to working with the United Nations to strengthen all parts of the justice chain in "Somaliland".

50. On 24 January, the Federal Minister of Justice and the five state ministers of justice signed a political agreement on a justice and corrections model for Somalia. Some technical aspects of the agreement are still being worked out at the federal level and state implementation plans are being developed. Meanwhile, initiatives to prevent violent extremism have continued through the joint rule of law programme, including the completion of phase one (one courtroom and one prison block) of the Mogadishu prison and court complex for the trial and detention in the civilian justice system of persons in high-risk cases relating to Al-Shabaab. Phase two of the rehabilitation project for high-risk prisoners in Baidoa is expected to be completed by 30 April.

51. The Mine Action Service helped the Somalia Explosive Management Authority to finalize a multi-year national mine action plan, which was launched on 15 February during the twenty-first International Meeting of National Mine Action Programme Directors and United Nations Advisers in Geneva. The strategy focuses on protection, youth employment, job skills and stability. Moreover, the Service continued to train and equip the federal and state police forces in explosive ordnance disposal. Teams trained by the Service safely destroyed 158 items of explosive remnants of war and conducted post-blast investigations at 28 sites where improvised explosive devices had been deployed.

52. During the reporting period, the Mine Action Service deployed community liaison officers to 41 recovered districts across the southern and central regions to deliver risk education messages to local communities about explosive hazards and to promote group discussions on the root causes of violent extremism, which could help with the design of mitigation responses. The liaison officers facilitated 250 group discussion sessions, attended by 3,038 individuals of different backgrounds, 64 per

cent of them male and 36 per cent female. Participants indicated that unemployment and lack of education were the two driving factors leading to violent extremism.

53. To help to build community confidence at the district level the Somalia Stability Fund continued to support initiatives covering community infrastructure and the rehabilitation of government facilities in Adale, Baardheere, Kismaayo and Mahadday Weym, local-level reconciliation efforts in Gaalkacyo and a gendered district analysis for Buulobarde. The Mine Action Service continued to promote stabilization activities at the community level through the clearance of hazardous material affecting 59 communities. Moreover, 160 assessments of non-functional public infrastructure were conducted and the results shared with community resilience and recovery partners for the safe conduct of operations.

Strand 3
Stabilization, community recovery and extension of State authority

54. At a stabilization forum held on 29 March and involving federal and state officials and international partners, the importance of stabilization within the overall security transition was highlighted, as was the role of the states in enhancing the implementation of related initiatives. Led by the federal member state ministries of the interior, workshops were held in February (Galmudug, Jubaland, South-West State) and March (HirShabelle) to develop state stabilization plans, as envisaged in the security pact. Following the reconciliation workshop held for the Abgal and the Shiidle clans, the Balcad district authorities selected a core facilitation team consisting of government and community representatives that will identify priorities.

Strand 4
Preventing and countering violent extremism

55. UNSOM continued to support the Federal Government in implementing its national strategy for preventing and countering violent extremism. The new, revised strategy has been translated into Somali and received Cabinet endorsement. At the federal level, a coordination office for preventing and countering violent extremism has been set up in the Office of the Prime Minister and a federal coordinator has been appointed. The federal ministries and federal member states, supported by UNSOM, also developed local action plans, in which priority needs are identified and local solutions designed to prevent recruitment and radicalization are canvassed.

56. UNSOM continued to support the Federal Government's defectors rehabilitation programme by facilitating coordination with partners and donors and providing technical support in developing standard operating procedures for the reception, screening and reintegration of defectors. Three rehabilitation centres for male defectors are operational in Mogadishu, Baidoa and Kismaayo. As at April, they were supporting 83, 197 and 119 defectors, respectively.

C. Transition planning

57. Since 4 December, the Federal Government has led a planning process for the transfer of responsibility for security to the Somali authorities focusing on four areas: the operational handover of locations from AMISOM to the Somali security forces; institutional capacity-building; the implementation of the national security architecture; and the alignment of supporting activities, such as initiatives regarding stabilization, local governance and preventing and countering violent extremism, with locations to be handed over by AMISOM. The drafting group for the plan visited all the federal member states to obtain input. Subsequently, the National Security Adviser circulated an initial draft of a transition plan, which was welcomed by international

partners on 11 March. The implementation of the plan will be steered by a team led by the Federal Government, in collaboration with the federal member states and international partners, and using technical input from the comprehensive approach to security strands.

V. Human rights and protection

A. Human rights

58. Violations of the right to freedom of expression continued in the reporting period, with six arbitrary arrests and the conviction of two journalists arrested in "Somaliland", whose sentences were later commuted to fines. One media outlet was closed and restrictions were placed on reporting. Civilian casualties decreased in the reporting period but Al-Shabaab reportedly carried out more than 100 abductions. Prolonged detention without judicial review, mostly of suspected Al-Shabaab members, continues to occur in Puntland.

59. One civilian was injured in an air strike by unidentified aircraft in Juba Hoose and another was killed by AMISOM in Hiraan. One prisoner died while in custody in the central prison in Mogadishu. Two women were sexually assaulted and two others injured by police at a camp for internally displaced persons in Puntland. Three death sentences were pronounced and one person on death row was released, after being pardoned by the victim's family.

B. Compliance with the human rights due diligence policy

60. Cascade briefings on human rights were delivered to members of the Puntland defence forces identified for integration into the national army. Such briefings constitute one of the measures identified in the framework of the human rights due diligence policy risk assessment. UNSOM and UNOPS sought confirmation from Puntland military officials that only trained troops would be considered for integration and assurances that the 91 soldiers selected but not yet trained would receive human rights training. The AMISOM-UNSOM-UNSOS technical working group set up to implement the human rights due diligence policy resumed its monthly meetings and discussed options for stepping up efforts with regard to accountability for violations, including the proposal that AMISOM respond to allegation letters within 90 days.

C. Children in armed conflict

61. During the reporting period, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting mechanism verified 1,349 cases of grave violations affecting 999 children, 173 of whom were girls. The violations included 550 abductions, 448 cases of recruitment, 72 cases of sexual violence, 99 killings and 26 cases of children injured by armed forces and groups. Two hospitals were looted, 43 schools were attacked and there were seven incidents of denial of humanitarian aid.

62. On 19 January, 36 children were rescued from Al-Shabaab by Somali national army special forces in Shabelle Dhexe. Six required medical treatment and were hospitalized and the others were taken to a reintegration centre supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Mogadishu.

D. Prevention of sexual violence

63. The United Nations continued to receive reports from around the country of sexual violence, generally affecting women and girls living in settlements for internally displaced persons. The eviction of more than 3,000 families in Mogadishu on 29 and 30 December contributed to the deterioration of the already-weak protective environment for internally displaced persons. UNFPA, working with the gender-based violence subcluster, mobilized 70 health workers and psychosocial counsellors to provide services and information to survivors of gender-based violence. The subcluster provided 2,257 girls, 7,886 boys, 32,015 women and 6,815 men with information and training to boost their capacity to prevent gender-based violence.

VI. Humanitarian situation

64. A massive scale-up of famine prevention efforts and better-than-expected *deyr* season (September to November) rains in 2017 helped to reduce the risk of famine, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Some 5.4 million people, down from a peak of 6.2 million, are still in need of assistance, while the number of people in urgent need of life-saving assistance has dropped from 3.2 million to 2.7 million. Half a million people are in integrated phase classification 4 ("Emergency"). More than half of those in need are children. Malnutrition rates are at serious levels and among the highest in the world. Overall, 1.2 million children could be malnourished by the end of 2018. With continuing drought conditions, the situation remains extremely fragile and far from returning to levels prior to the crisis in 2017. Without timely action, the threat of famine could rapidly reappear, especially with the current forecast of average to below-average rainfall during the *gu* rainy season (April to June). Some 2.1 million people are now internally displaced, including 1 million newly displaced in 2017. Most of them largely depend on aid because they have lost their means of livelihood.

65. Evictions continued, in particular in Mogadishu and Baidoa. In February, 2,820 internally displaced persons were forcibly removed in Baidoa. Overall, 200,280 individuals were evicted in 2017, 154,000 (77 per cent) of them in Mogadishu, which hosts nearly 626,000 internally displaced persons. The mass eviction that took place on 29 and 30 December 2017 accounted for 23 per cent of the year's total and was the worst single incident of mass eviction in 2017. Humanitarian workers continue to engage with the authorities to seek long-term solutions. On 8 February, the Mayor of Mogadishu announced the establishment of a temporary five-member commission, chaired by the Deputy Governor of Banadir, to investigate the evictions.

66. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Under-Secretary-General, Administrator of UNDP visited Somalia on 30 and 31 January to highlight the seriousness of the humanitarian situation and the new approach to addressing it. They launched the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia and the resilience and recovery framework, which outline areas in which humanitarian and development partners will collaborate with the Federal Government to help to break the cycle of vulnerability and need by 2022. Under the Plan, $1.5 billion is called for to sustain famine prevention efforts in 2018. At the time of reporting, $369.2 million in humanitarian assistance had been received (of which $228.8 million is allocated for the Plan).

67. Humanitarian agencies continue to encounter difficulties on most roads in southern and central Somalia and in some parts of Bari and the disputed Sool region in the north, mainly because of insecurity, illegal checkpoints and extortion. State

authorities conducted operations to remove unauthorized checkpoints but armed actors responded by shifting to non-static checkpoints. Al-Shabaab roadblocks in parts of HirShabelle, Jubaland and South-West State continued to constrain the passage of relief supplies and essential commercial goods, thereby driving up costs. In some locations, such as Diinsoor and Waajid in South-West State, Garbahaarrey in Jubaland and Buulobarde in HirShabelle, humanitarian organizations remain forced by the roadblocks to airlift assistance instead of using more affordable and sustainable ground transportation. The authorities of South-West State have agreed to establish a single registration and taxation point for humanitarian agencies.

VII. United Nations presence in Somalia

68. United Nations entities continue to be present in Baidoa, Beledweyne, Boosaaso, Dhooble, Doolow, Gaalkacyo, Garoowe, Hargeysa, Kismaayo, and Mogadishu. UNSOM and UNSOS conducted assessment missions in Dhuusamarreeb and a suitable location for a United Nations office has been identified in Galmudug. As at 18 March, 559 international and 1,196 national personnel were deployed throughout Somalia. UNSOM is developing proposals on how to better deliver as one United Nations and reconfigure the relevant components to enable them to provide effective support for the implementation of the comprehensive approach to security, the national security architecture and the transition plan.

69. The United Nations has embarked on a programme criticality exercise in 2018, which will inform a review of the Organization's footprint in Somalia.

70. In January 2018, a Mogadishu security enhancement plan was adopted by the United Nations and the Federal Government, both of which appointed focal points to ensure maximum security at the international airport. The plan, which would be funded partly by the United Nations and international partners, consists of five layers of security involving all actors concerned with the area's security.

71. The United Nations continues to implement recommended risk mitigation measures to improve safety and security for all United Nations personnel throughout Somalia, including in the Mogadishu international airport area. Between late December 2017 and April 2018, United Nations system crisis management exercises were conducted in two regional offices, Beledweyne and Kismaayo, with the participation of AMISOM.

VIII. Observations

72. Despite the perennial political crises arising from the challenges associated with managing clan politics and relations between state institutions, and from the structural flaws and shortcomings within those fledgling institutions, Somalia continues to make progress towards building a functional State. I pay tribute to the leadership of the Federal Government and the federal member states for their continued commitment to constructive cooperation in peacebuilding and State-building.

73. Further progress in defining the Somali federal model, including by formalizing the status of federal member states and the agreements between them and the Federal Government on the division of responsibilities and powers and the sharing of resources and revenues, would help to stabilize the political environment. In advancing this agenda, I urge all parties to abstain from the use of violence to achieve political goals and to respect the provisional federal constitution and the rule of law. That is critical for the development of a truly federal Somalia.

74. I am very concerned about the implications of the recurring political crises in the Federal Parliament, including the latest, which has impeded progress on critical legislation. I urge all political actors to put the interests of Somalia and its people first. Further delays and political instability could risk rolling back hard-earned achievements.

75. I reiterate my call upon Member States to shield it from their political differences, particularly considering the continued fragility of that country and the need for unity among its people and leaders to put it on the path of sustainable peace and development.

76. The development of a national reconciliation framework, which is supported by my Special Representative and international partners, is critical for State-building. I am pleased to note the progress made in conflict resolution in Gaalkacyo and the launch of the Marka reconciliation process in Mogadishu. I urge the federal and regional authorities to prioritize dialogue and inclusive processes to resolve their differences at the local level and to foster local, regional and national reconciliation. I also urge that a conflict prevention and reconciliation approach be adopted in defining key processes, including the constitutional review, the electoral model and security sector reform.

77. I welcome the progress made towards preparations for multi-party elections by universal suffrage in 2020–2021, which would move Somalia beyond exclusively clan-based power-sharing arrangements. I commend the National Independent Electoral Commission on its recent nationwide consultations to identify challenges in organizing those elections. I encourage stakeholders to make swift progress on the choice of the electoral model and finalization of the electoral legal framework in a transparent, inclusive and accountable manner. I also encourage the Commission to consider the relevant voter registration options and to select a modality that is applicable and suitable for achieving inclusive and sustainable nationwide voter registration that ensures the voting rights of all Somalis.

78. Federal and federal member state leaders are showing commitment to improving security and accelerating security sector reform. I commend President of Somalia for his ongoing personal engagement in reforming the national army. Those efforts should continue within the framework of the national security architecture and the transition plan and be based on the comprehensive approach to security.

79. Al-Shabaab has demonstrated its ability to execute deadly terrorist attacks in Mogadishu and to engage Somali security forces and AMISOM. Suicide bombings and targeted assassinations in Mogadishu and other localities continue, claiming the lives of innocent civilians, including children, and maiming many others. The twin suicide car bombings of 23 February, which killed more than 40 people in Mogadishu, are a stark reminder of the threat. I encourage the Federal Government and international partners to develop a coherent approach to mitigating the threat posed by improvised explosive devices.

80. In that regard, I pay tribute to AMISOM and the Somali security forces, which have thwarted most of the attacks and continue to preserve political gains, thereby protecting space for further progress. The sacrifices that they continue to make, under very difficult conditions, should not be in vain and should inspire all Somali leaders at the national and regional levels to make the required progress.

81. I welcome the leadership of the Federal Government in developing a transition plan to assume full responsibility for security. Continued close cooperation with the federal member states, the African Union, troop-contributing countries and the security partners of Somalia will be key. I urge all contributors to the country's security, whether operational, financial or political, to align their efforts with the priorities set forth in the plan and to coordinate their support for the country's security sector to ensure a coherent approach and make sure that combined efforts result in stronger outcomes.

82. Progress must continue in implementing the rule of law. That includes the full implementation of the state police plans through the joint police project I welcome the political agreement on the justice and corrections model and call upon the Federal Government to expedite the model's implementation and to rapidly complete its justice and correction plans and thereby increase the provision of basic justice services to the local population. Linking justice and correction plans to those for the state police would ensure a comprehensive approach to the rule of law at the federal member state level. The integration of regional forces, such as Darwish, into the state police and the national army, in accordance with the national security architecture and new policing model, is an important step in the transition process. The support of the United Nations for strengthening law enforcement at the state level is part of a criminal justice approach linking human rights, gender and access to justice, and an integral part of countering violent extremism. It is also a recognition that a focus on military responses will not be sufficient to deal with the lack of security in Somalia. I urge the strengthening of the regional security architecture, including the regional security councils and regional security offices, and the timely completion of the regional operational readiness assessment so as to obtain a clear picture regarding the number, capacity and capabilities of those forces.

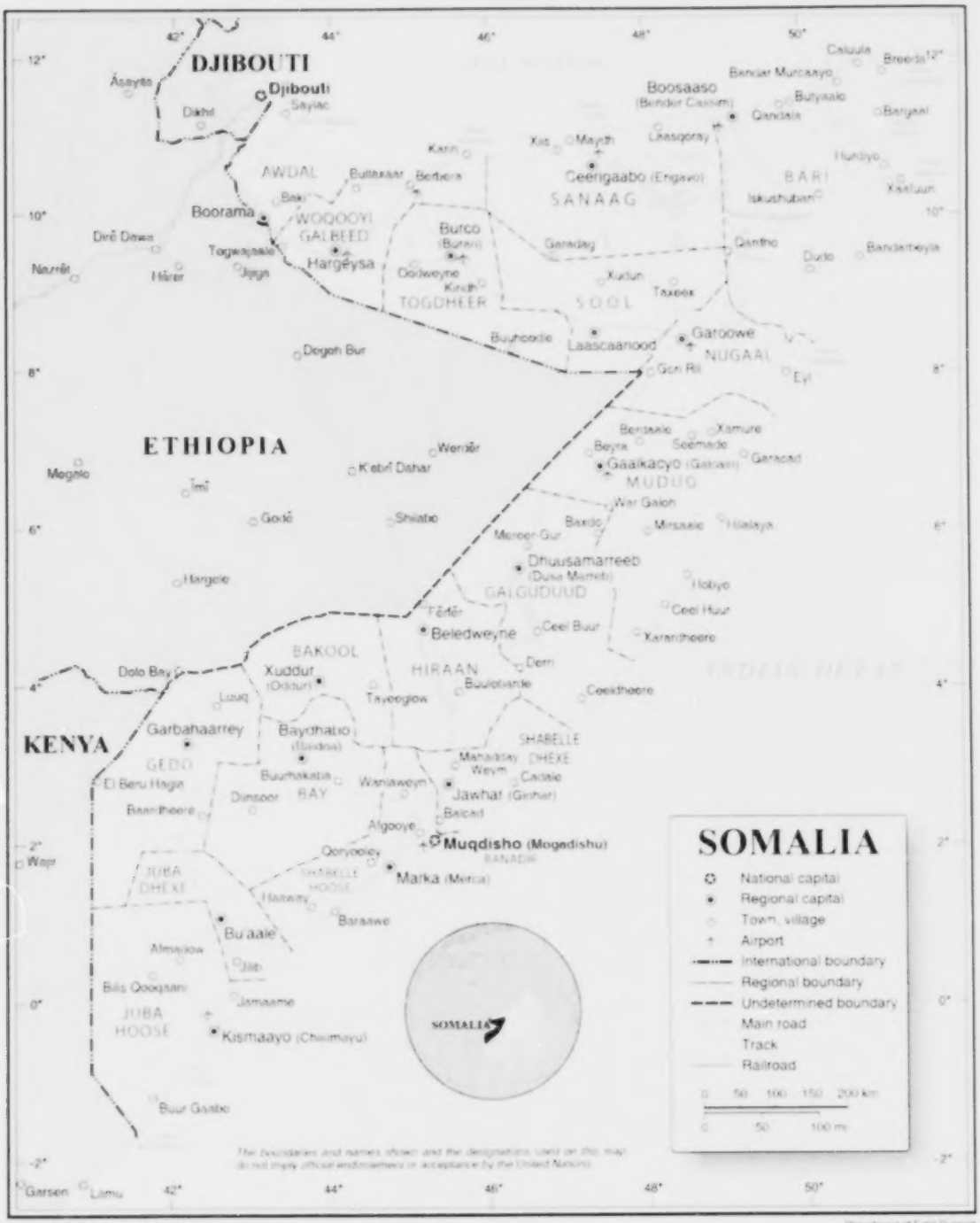
83. I am pleased to see some improvement in the humanitarian situation, largely owing to humanitarian aid. However, the needs remain great. Some 500,000 people are in a humanitarian emergency situation, which may swiftly reach a catastrophic level if aid is not sustained at the level of 2017. Sufficient funding is needed up front to avert famine. I am grateful to donors that have signalled their commitments for continued support but concerned about delays in the fulfilment of commitments and the risk of an overall decrease in contributions. Frontloading sufficient funds early in the year will be critical to keeping the situation from deteriorating further in the second quarter of 2018.

84. I remain concerned about the continued abduction of children and the use of child soldiers in the conflict. That 36 children were rescued by Somali special forces in Shabelle Dhexe in January and ultimately transferred to a rehabilitation centre in Mogadishu was a source of great comfort. I call upon all parties to take measures to mitigate the impact on child soldiers when conducting military operations.

85. I also remain concerned about the long prison sentences handed down by the military that remain in place against 40 children in a UNICEF-supported reintegration centre in Garoowe, Puntland, because of their alleged association with Al-Shabaab. I call upon the President of Puntland to grant a presidential pardon, accelerate the children's transfer to UNICEF-supported reintegration centres closer to their areas of origin and direct military authorities to transfer future criminal investigations against civilians, in particular children, to the civilian jurisdiction.

86. Despite the gains made in 2016 with the election of women to 24 per cent of seats in the Federal Parliament, the political participation of women and their role in decision-making remain modest. I am concerned about the inadequate support extended to the women parliamentarians and their exclusion from and poor representation in key decision-making processes. Failure to address this matter could have an adverse effect on the role and representation of women in the 2020–2021 elections. I call upon the Federal Government, the Federal Parliament, civil society and the international community to strengthen collective efforts to support the agenda of women parliamentarians and promote their role in the Federal Parliament and in advancing peace and stability in Somalia.

87. I pay tribute to my Special Representative, Michael Keating, my two Deputy Special Representatives and the staff of UNSOM, the head and staff of UNSOS, and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Somalia for their continued hard work in challenging conditions.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United Nations S/2018/412

Security Council

Distr.: General
2 May 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 1 May 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Pursuant to the request of the Security Council in paragraph 61 of its resolution 2409 (2018), I have the honour to submit the 30-day update covering the period from 21 March to 26 April 2018 on political and technical progress towards the holding of elections on 23 December 2018 and obstacles to the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

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Annex

Update of the Secretary-General on progress in the electoral process and implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement, 26 April 2018

1. The present update covers developments from 21 March to 26 April 2018 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and is submitted pursuant to resolution 2409 (2018), in which the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to update it in writing every 30 days on political and technical progress towards the holding of elections on 23 December 2018 and on obstacles to the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement.

I. Key political developments related to the electoral process and implementation of the political agreement

2. The government and other national institutions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process, took steps to achieve some key electoral benchmarks. On 21 and 29 March and 17 April, the National Council submitted recommendations to the Ministry of the Interior and Security aimed at ending the duplication of some opposition political parties. Subsequently, the government submitted the revised lists of political parties and platforms to the Independent National Electoral Commission, which has yet to publish the final lists of political parties eligible to contest the 23 December 2018 presidential and national and provincial legislative elections. On 27 March, the government sent a draft amendment to the 2015 law on public demonstrations to the National Assembly for review. On 16 April, in Kinshasa, an extraordinary session of the Council of Ministers, chaired by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Joseph Kabila, adopted the draft bill on the distribution of seats for national, provincial and local elections. According to the electoral calendar, the bill is expected to be promulgated by the President by 8 May, after its adoption by Parliament.

3. Discussions between the main opposition parties aimed at creating new political alliances or platforms continued. Following his election as President of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social on 31 March, Felix Tshisekedi announced his intention to be a candidate in the presidential election and expressed his party's willingness to forge political alliances to achieve a democratic transfer of power in December 2018. The Mouvement de libération du Congo and the Union pour la nation congolaise also called on the opposition to coalesce behind a single presidential candidate.

4. A debate emerged regarding nationality and eligibility for elections. The Constitution and laws provide that Congolese nationality is "one and exclusive" and that candidates must be Congolese nationals by origin. On 27 March, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Flory Kabange Numbi, launched an enquiry into the nationality of exiled presidential opposition candidate Moïse Katumbi following reports in the media suggesting that he had held Italian nationality from 2000 to 2017. The identities of several Congolese politicians, including members of Parliament and the government, who are presumed to be dual citizens were published in the media. The Permanent Secretary of the ruling Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et le démocratie, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, called on members of his party who held more than one nationality to abide by the Constitution by regularizing their situation with the Ministry of Justice, failing which they might be barred from running for

office. Supporters of Mr. Katumbi perceived the judicial enquiry into the claim of double nationality as a further attempt by the government to prevent their candidate from participating in the 23 December elections.

II. Key developments related to the implementation of the agreement

Electoral developments

5. On 6 April, the Independent National Electoral Commission published the final voter registry following a review process that removed some 6 million duplicate registrations and individuals who were not old enough to vote from the database. The total number of voters currently stands at 40,287,387, 50 per cent of whom are women. On 10 April, the Commission launched a tender process for the independent audit of the registry in accordance with the electoral calendar. In addition, the Commission finalized an electoral code of conduct for political parties that has been signed by more than 200 political parties, which represents one third of the registered parties. On 17 April, the President of the Commission, Corneille Nangaa, announced that the Commission would launch an audit of the voting machines with a view to addressing concerns raised by some national and international actors regarding their use in the upcoming elections.

6. The lack of a clear disbursement plan for the funding of the Independent National Electoral Commission remains a key challenge. On 28 March, in line with the government's decision to assume full responsibility for financing the electoral process, the Ministry of Finance disbursed $22.6 million to the Commission. However, the Commission has not yet agreed to the revised multi-donor Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Congo, which amounts to $67 million. That could have an impact on the Commission's ability to undertake its logistical responsibilities and the sensitization of voters, which are areas in which support from the project had been foreseen.

7. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has begun the second phase of the electoral assistance logistics support plan, which runs from 1 March to 23 December 2018. The plan entails the mobilization of the major assets required for the deployment of non-sensitive and sensitive electoral materials; the recruitment of personnel and their co-location with the Independent National Electoral Commission; and coordination with partners for the timely deployment of assets. MONUSCO is currently preparing a bid solicitation for the procurement of the required air assets and completing an amendment to the existing fuel contract for the supply of additional aviation fuel to support the deployment of electoral materials. The Mission is also conducting site assessments at 3 reception centres and 15 hubs, in anticipation of the deployment of voting materials across 129 sites.

8. It should be noted that, at the time of reporting, MONUSCO had not received an official request from the Independent National Electoral Commission to support the deployment of voting machines. The timeline indicated in the Commission's electoral calendar suggests that the procurement of electoral materials and equipment should have been completed by 16 April 2018. However, the Mission has not yet received clear information regarding the status of the procurement process. The late arrival of electoral materials would reduce the time frame for deployment and require adjustments to the Mission's logistical preparations that could result in increased costs for the Mission.

Restrictions on political space and violence as they relate to the implementation of the agreement in the electoral context

9. Restrictions on political space continued despite a relative decrease in the number of violations of civil and political rights and fundamental freedoms. During the thirty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council, held from 26 February to 23 March 2018, the Minister for Human Rights of the Democratic Republic of the Congo announced that the general ban on political demonstrations would be lifted. However, national security forces repressed peaceful protests held on 26 March by the youth movement Lutte pour le changement in Kindu (Maniema province) and in Beni, Goma and Kasindi (North Kivu province), to demand a stronger mandate for MONUSCO. On 2 April, a peaceful sit-in, organized by civil society members in Tshikapa (Kasai province) was also repressed by the police, who arrested four people, including a journalist. On 7 April, four individuals, including a minor, were arrested and detained in Lubumbashi (Haut-Katanga province) while on their way to attend a political meeting organized by the opposition platform Ensemble pour le changement. On 28 March, in Tshikapa, a journalist was arrested and detained for two days over an article he posted on social media that denounced threats and intimidations against the media by some agents of the provincial government. No political prisoners were released during the period under review. At least 86 political prisoners remain in detention, while some of the political prisoners mentioned in the 31 December 2016 political agreement are yet to be released.

Confidence-building measures

10. At its extraordinary plenary session on the duplication of political parties held on 29 March, the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process denied two high-profile political figures, Prime Minister Bruno Tshibala (Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social/Tshibala) and Pierre Lumbi (Mouvement social pour le renouveau/Lumbi) representation of their party. The decision triggered further protests and calls for the resignation of the Chair of the National Council, Joseph Olenghankoy. The extraordinary plenary session was a follow-up to the meeting of 21 March during which the National Council had recommended an end to the duplication of the Group des sept (the "G7") political parties, but recognized the Mouvement social pour le renouveau led by François Rubota (Majorité présidentielle) at the expense of the wing chaired by Pierre Lumbi, on the grounds that the latter had failed to provide the necessary registration documents.

III. Good offices efforts in support of the implementation of the agreement

11. Deep-seated mistrust and suspicion among the key stakeholders regarding the electoral process and the pace of progress in the implementation of the confidence-building measures continue to fuel political tensions. In addition to the need to vigorously pursue efforts to foster a coordinated and coherent approach among the United Nations and regional and international partners in support of elections, the government's mistrust of some key international partners is a significant challenge that needs to be overcome. Against that background, the United Nations continues to use its good offices to promote dialogue among the political actors and encourage the sustained engagement of regional and international partners to help create conditions conducive to the holding of timely, peaceful and credible elections.

12. On 29 March, in Brazzaville, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region met the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, in his dual capacity as Chair of

both the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region, to exchange views on the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and related challenges.

13. During the reporting period, my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of Congo pursued her consultations with national stakeholders, focusing, inter alia, on support for the organization of credible and inclusive elections. In that regard, she met with the President of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social and leader of the opposition coalition Rassemblement, Felix Tshisekedi, on 23 March; the Chief of Staff of the President on 2 April; the Governor of Kinshasa, André Kimbuta, on 4 April 2018; President Kabila on 6 April 2018; the President's Special Adviser on Security, Jean Mbuyu, the Minister in charge of relations with Parliament, Jean-Pierre Lisanga Bonganga, and the Permanent Secretary of the Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et le démocratie, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, on 19 April; and the Vice Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior, Henri Mova Sakanyi, on 20 April. My Special Representative also met with all the ambassadors of member States of the Southern African Development Community accredited to the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 4 April to exchange views on the political, security and electoral situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to highlight the importance of the regional bloc's efforts to address the situation. In addition, she visited Bunia, Ituri province, where she discussed with the provincial authorities the prevailing political and security situation in the province, including efforts to create an environment conducive to the holding of elections there. On 13 April, she visited Beni, North Kivu province, where she had similar discussions with the Mayor of Beni town and the Territorial Administrator of Beni territory.

14. On 24 April, President Kabila attended the Double Troika Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community in Luanda. Among other regional issues, the Summit's final communiqué urged Congolese political actors to stay committed to the implementation of the electoral calendar, reaffirmed the Community's commitment to supporting upcoming elections and reversed the body's decision to deploy a Special Envoy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the light of the progress made towards the holding of elections.

IV. Observations

15. I welcome the progress made towards some key electoral milestones and the commitment shown by the Independent National Electoral Commission to meet the deadlines laid out in the electoral calendar. However, persistent divergences among political stakeholders over the electoral process and the lack of political space remain a threat to the holding of credible and inclusive elections. I call upon the government to take the necessary measures to instil confidence in the electoral process and pave the way for a democratic transfer of power in line with the provisions of the 31 December 2016 political agreement and the Congolese Constitution. Progress in the implementation of confidence-building measures envisaged in the agreement remains essential in order to ease political tensions and create an environment conducive to credible, transparent and inclusive elections. The swift publication by the Independent National Electoral Commission of the list of political parties and platforms would help address existing suspicions and build trust between political actors and the Commission.

16. The legitimate aspirations of the Congolese people can only be achieved through the meaningful and constructive engagement of all stakeholders in the political process. I call on the ruling majority and the opposition to rise above partisan interests

and work towards consolidating democratic practices in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I encourage the government to ensure a level playing field for all political actors and to take initiatives to increase the number of women running for office. Lifting the ban on public demonstrations would greatly contribute to the opening of political space, thereby allowing the Congolese people to freely exercise their political and civil rights.

17. Key milestones in the electoral process, such as the commencement of the deployment of electoral materials on 12 May, are fast approaching. The positive momentum generated by the publication of the electoral calendar and the timely promulgation of the electoral law may be disrupted if adequate funding is not provided to the Independent National Electoral Commission. I encourage the government to disburse on a regular basis the necessary funds to the Commission. Delayed funding could have an impact on the timely holding of elections and lead to further political tensions.

18. Finally, I encourage international and regional actors to continue providing, in close collaboration with the government, support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in addressing the political and security challenges it faces. The Democratic Republic of the Congo needs our combined efforts more than ever. I call on the Security Council and partners to spare no effort in supporting initiatives for dialogue and the conduct of elections in a timely manner.

United Nations S/2018/413

Security Council

Distr.: General
2 May 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 2 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you to express our indignation and deep disappointment at the latest anti-Semitic remarks by Mahmoud Abbas, the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, and request that you condemn his statements.

During an address to the Palestinian National Council on 30 April, Chairman Abbas expressed support for the most hateful racist conspiracies historically spread about the Jewish people. He claimed that the genocide perpetrated against our people during the Holocaust was not a consequence of hatred and anti-Semitism but of Jewish "social behaviour, [charging] interest, and financial matters".

Mr. Abbas then went on to further promote discredited historical fiction by saying that "those who sought a Jewish state weren't Jews". This claim was a dangerous attempt by the Chairman to rewrite history and claim that the Zionist movement was a result of a European conspiracy, rather than the millennia-old realization of the Jewish people's prayers to return to our historic homeland in the Land of Israel.

This is not the first time Mr. Abbas has spouted such hateful rhetoric. Just this past January, in an address to the Palestine Liberation Organization's Central Committee, he declared that the re-establishment of the nation-state of the Jewish people in our historic homeland is "a colonial project [that] has nothing to do with Judaism". He also accused European powers of "moving Jews from Europe to the Middle East" as part of a plan to further their economic interests.

It would seem that little has changed since Mr. Abbas wrote his Holocaust-denying 1982 doctoral dissertation, entitled "The other side: the secret relationship between Nazism and Zionism", that denied the scope of the Nazi crimes against our people.

Such a hateful diatribe against a people who have undergone thousands of years of intolerable persecution, is completely unacceptable. I call on all leaders of good faith to condemn these repeated hateful remarks and demand a full and sincere apology from Mr. Abbas. The Security Council must not stand idly by in the face of this incitement and apparent denial of Israel's right to exist.

For there to be true progress towards peace in our region, the Palestinians will need leaders who are committed to promoting hope and seeking a better future, rather than peddling in hate and inciting bigotry. We hope that this day comes soon.

(*Signed*) Danny **Danon**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Please recycle

United Nations S/2018/414

Security Council

Distr.: General
4 May 2018
English
Original: Arabic

Identical letters dated 2 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The illegitimate so-called "international coalition" led by the United States has perpetrated a new massacre against innocent Syrians. On Tuesday, 1 May 2018, that coalition's warplanes bombed residential neighbourhoods in the village of Fadil in the countryside of southern Hasakah governorate. Some 25 civilians were killed, two of them elderly men and the rest women and children. More than 100 civilians were injured. The bombing also caused damage to civilian homes and property, and to the village's infrastructure.

Such massacres — which have become too numerous to count — continue to be perpetrated against the Syrian people by the coalition. The coalition is systematically providing support to the remnants of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization and trying to reactivate that organization in the form of the separatist militias that are proxies of the United States in Hasakah, Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr governorates. All that merely confirms that the only goal of that coalition is to undermine the authority and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and prolong the Syrian crisis, in stark contravention of Security Council resolutions, which have all stressed the need to preserve the unity of the people and territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility to maintain international peace and security, and to act immediately to put an end to the war crimes and crimes against humanity being perpetrated by the coalition against the Syrian people, and to prevent the coalition from committing such crimes again. The Council must also act to end the hostile presence of United States and other foreign forces in Syrian territory and prevent the United States from carrying out its schemes to partition the Syrian Arab Republic and plunder its resources. Those schemes have been exposed by this new crime committed by the United States, as they were by previous crimes, including in particular the annihilation of the city of Raqqah and the attack launched by the United States, France and Britain against the Syrian Arab Republic on 14 April 2018.

I should be grateful if this present letter could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-07206 (E) 080518 080518

Please recycle

United Nations S/2018/415

Security Council

Distr.: General
4 May 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 2 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith an information bulletin dated 2 May 2018 from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

18-07205 (E) 070518 090518

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 2 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (2 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported four incidents of gunfire: two in Aleppo Governorate and two in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported one incident of gunfire in Idlib Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic carried out two humanitarian operations: one in Uwaynat al-Kabirah, Aleppo Governorate, and one in Tall Sikkin Sarut, Hama Governorate. In total 890 food parcels were distributed. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 3.8 tons.

In total, 1,799 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,547.16 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 220 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 79,430 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,509.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/416

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 May 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 2 May 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1031 (1995), I have the honour to transmit the fifty-third report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, covering the period from 22 October 2017 to 21 April 2018, which I received from the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could bring this report to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Antonio **Guterres**

18-06935 (E) 040518

Please recycle

Annex

Letter dated 26 April 2018 from the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina addressed to the Secretary-General

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1031 (1995), which requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council reports from the High Representative in accordance with annex 10 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Conclusions of the London Peace Implementation Conference of 8 and 9 December 1995, I herewith transmit the fifty-third report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina. I would kindly ask for this report to be distributed to the Security Council members for their consideration.

This is my nineteenth regular report to the Secretary-General since assuming the post of High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and European Union Special Representative on 26 March 2009. The present report covers the period from 22 October 2017 to 21 April 2018.

Should you or any Council member require any information beyond what is provided in the attached report or have any questions regarding its contents, I would be pleased to provide you with it.

(*Signed*) Valentin **Inzko**

Fifty-third report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina

Summary

This report covers the period from 22 October 2017 through 21 April 2018. While the institutions and political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina have managed to deliver incremental progress on some of their commitments related to Euro-Atlantic integration processes, the last six months have also seen a notable deterioration in terms of divisive public rhetoric and respect for the rule of law within the country. Crucial domestic issues related to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Election Law and the Criminal Procedure Code have remained unresolved, as many parties in authority are focused on consolidating power and playing to their respective voting bases ahead of the electoral campaign season. In its interim report on Bosnia and Herzegovina published along with the 2018 enlargement package on 17 April, the European Commission similarly noted that tensions between parties had slowed the pace of reform.

Among positive developments, the most notable achievement during the reporting period was the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities' handover of answers to the European Commission questionnaire in February, an important step in the country's attempts at becoming a European Union candidate country in the future. Another positive development was the adoption of a set of excise laws, which, along with other conditions, resulted in the completion of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) review and approval of the second disbursement of funds under the Extended Fund Facility arrangement, on 9 February.

Other notable developments included the trilateral meeting in March between the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency and the presidents of Serbia and Croatia. Also, in February the Financial Action Task Force announced that Bosnia and Herzegovina is no longer subject to special monitoring by the Task Force, having made progress in addressing previously identified strategic deficiencies in its efforts concerning anti-money-laundering and combating the financing of terrorism.

Despite these positive developments, major challenges remain. The next general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina are expected to take place in October 2018, yet the formation of authorities after the vote could prove extremely difficult if changes to the Election Law are not agreed that would regulate the indirect election of delegates to one of the chambers of the Federation parliament. As previously reported, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court struck down provisions of the law regulating elections to the Federation House of Peoples in July 2017, having declared these parts of the law unconstitutional in its December 2016 decision in the Ljubic case. The failure to constitute the Federation House of Peoples following the elections would prevent the election of the new Federation president and vice-presidents, who are responsible for nominating the new Federation Government, and would also prevent the election of Bosniak and Croat delegates to the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Peoples, one of the two houses of the state-level parliament.

With the announcement of elections expected in May and the elections themselves in October, the relevant authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina must agree on electoral changes that would enable the smooth conduct and implementation of the results of the 2018 general elections. As the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board political directors outlined in their December 2017 communiqué, "as an immediate priority, the 1 December 2016 decision of the Bosnia and Herzegovina

Constitutional Court, which specifically concerns the elections to the Federation House of Peoples, must be implemented, and not made more challenging by combining it with political demands".

An equally pressing issue has arisen concerning the Bosnia and Herzegovina judiciary. In June 2017, the Constitutional Court declared as unconstitutional several provisions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Criminal Procedure Code regulating special investigative measures in criminal proceedings. As the deadline of six months has passed without the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliament correcting the issue, the Court could soon rule on non-enforcement, leaving the judiciary without the tools necessary for fighting organized crime and corruption. This would represent a very serious setback to the rule of law.

During the reporting period, I continued to urge the leadership of the Herzegovina-Neretva and some other cantonal assemblies to act to harmonize these cantons' constitutions with a decision of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court from 2000 and with the Federation Constitution, in order to ensure the equality of Serbs as a constituent people, and officially recognize the Serb language and Cyrillic alphabet.

Another cause for concern has been the continuation and escalation of divisive and destabilizing rhetoric from prominent political figures on all sides. For example, continuing a long-term trend, the Republika Srpska President has continued to deny the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to advocate for the eventual secession of the entity. During the reporting period, public comments were also made glorifying convicted war criminals and calling for the return of a Republika Srpska army. The Croat member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency has mused about the further internal division of the country, while other Croat politicians have threatened the dissolution of the country if the current electoral issues are not resolved to their satisfaction.

Under the authority vested in me under annex 10 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I reiterate that the entities have no right to secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina and that the Agreement guarantees the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the internal constitutional position of the entities.

In addition, I must express my concern over comments made by a number of political figures about the possibility of future conflict if the country were to break apart. These included comments by the Federation Prime Minister about the production of military equipment and subsequent comments by the Bosniak member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency, which went further, suggesting that a rearming effort was under way in preparation for a hypothetical war scenario. These comments followed controversy earlier in the reporting period about the purchase of long-barrel weapons by the Republika Srpska police.

There is far too much unhelpful and provocative rhetoric in Bosnia and Herzegovina. All public figures must choose their words carefully and responsibly. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a single multi-ethnic sovereign state consisting of two entities, in which all citizens — the three constituent peoples and others — live and work together, and elected officials above all have a responsibility to contribute to peace and reconciliation.

I. Introduction

This is my nineteenth regular report to the Secretary-General since assuming the post of High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2009. It provides a narrative description of progress made towards goals outlined in previous reports, registers factual developments, logs relevant citations and provides my impartial assessment of the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina in key areas within my mandate. I have focused on addressing these areas in line with my responsibility to uphold the civilian aspects of the Agreement. I have thus continued to encourage the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to make progress on the five objectives and two conditions necessary for the closure of the Office of the High Representative and worked to preserve measures previously undertaken to implement the Agreement.

I continue to direct my energies towards fulfilling my mandate in accordance with annex 10 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and relevant Security Council resolutions. Additionally, my Office wholeheartedly supports the efforts by the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina in moving forward on closer integration with those bodies.

II. Political update

A. General political environment

The ethno-political division in Bosnia and Herzegovina persists. The long-lasting policy of the Republika Srpska to challenge the state-level institutions has spilled over to the Federation. These ongoing trends, which have strengthened over the years, negatively affect the functionality of the state and Federation authorities and hold back the resolute integration of the country into Euro-Atlantic structures. Although there are several pending issues the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina must address, the political parties have already begun their pre-electoral campaigns well ahead of the October 2018 general elections.

At the state and Federation levels, the opposing views of the predominantly Bosniak Party for Democratic Action and the Croat party, the Croatian Democratic Union partners in the ruling coalitions at both levels — over necessary amendments to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Election Law continue to damage relations between them. Meanwhile, their fellow partner, the predominantly Bosniak Party for a Better Future, has threatened to leave the ruling coalitions at both levels and increasingly votes with the opposition. At the Federation level, the Government has been unable to complete appointments to the Federation Tax Administration, while neither house of the Federation Parliament met for more than two months from late January to mid-April.

In the Republika Srpska, after several turbulent sessions of the Republika Srpska National Assembly in the previous period, the ruling coalition and opposition parties made a half-hearted attempt to draft an agreement on cooperation, but owing to the lack of consensus among the parties, no agreement materialized. Although the ruling coalition is effective at moving its agenda forward, it continues to undermine itself through the frequent anti-Dayton and anti-state rhetoric by some of its leading officials.

Authorities at all levels continue to disregard or reject binding decisions of the judiciary, as the Federation-based parties have made little effort on their own towards reaching a political agreement that would address the issue of the Federation House

of Peoples in line with the decision of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court in the Ljubic case. In the city of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, citizens have not elected local representatives since 2008 because of another unimplemented Constitutional Court decision. For its part, the Republika Srpska continues to reject judgments of both the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court and the Bosnia and Herzegovina State Court concerning the registration of defence property and the celebration of "Republika Srpska Day" on 9 January.

Reflecting an overall disregard for the rule of law, authorities have persistently failed to implement European Court of Human Rights' rulings in the *Sejdic & Finci* and related cases, leaving in place discrimination against the right of certain persons to stand for public office.

B. Decisions of the High Representative during the reporting period

Despite ongoing challenges to the rule of law and the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the reporting period, I have continued to refrain from using my executive powers, in accordance with the policy of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board emphasizing local ownership over international decision-making.

C. Five objectives and two conditions for closure of the Office of the High Representative

Progress on objectives

During the reporting period, the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities made limited progress towards meeting the requirements of the 5+2 agenda set by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board as necessary for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

State and defence property

The process of registration of prospective defence property under the ownership of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina continued during the reporting period. The term "prospective defence property" refers to a defined list of immovable assets that are needed by the Bosnia and Herzegovina armed forces and should be registered to the Bosnia and Herzegovina State in accordance with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution, the Agreement on Succession Issues, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Law on Defence and relevant Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency decisions.

To date, 31 military locations located in the Federation falling under the category of prospective defence property have been successfully registered, 27 to the ownership of the State in relevant land records, and 4 others for use by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Defence or the Bosnia and Herzegovina armed forces. There are several additional properties in various phases of the registration process. To their credit, the competent state-level institutions have expedited their efforts to drive this process forward, mainly focused on clarifying and resolving various technical legal difficulties related to some prospective defence locations.

At the same time, the registration process for prospective defence property on the territory of the Republika Srpska remains blocked due to political obstruction. The Republika Srpska Geodetic Administration has rejected several registration requests owing to what it claims is the "non-existence of a valid legal basis". High-ranking Republika Srpska officials have made it clear in public statements that the Republika Srpska authorities have no intention to implement the final and binding

decision of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Court in the case of the prospective defence location in Han Pijesak, in open violation of the principle of the rule of law.

Concerning the issue of non-prospective defence and other state property, the Office of the High Representative remains concerned over violations of the Law on the Temporary Prohibition of Disposal of State Property of Bosnia and Herzegovina, better known as the State Property Disposal Ban. This law was enacted by the High Representative in March 2005 and subsequently adopted by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly on 30 March 2007, with the aim of creating effective measures for protecting the property interests of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina prior to the enactment of appropriate legislation. However, in the intervening period, it appears that transfers and disposals of state property assets occurred contrary to the provisions of the law, as is the case with several non-prospective defence locations on the territory of the Republika Srpska.

In this regard, it is important to underline that violations of the State Property Disposal Ban, which are null and void under the law, represent a serious challenge to the rule of law and directly damage the established property rights and interests of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, such violations may potentially produce numerous legal, practical and financial complications for both parties involved, who falsely believe that they acquired property rights on the basis of such transactions, and for the responsible public institutions. This is why the responsible institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina must conduct a thorough analysis of all cases in which violations of the ban or other illegal actions or irregularities occurred in relation to disposal and various forms of transfer and allocation of state property assets.

The adoption of comprehensive state-level legislation that fully acknowledges and adopts the principles of the 2012 Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court decision — which established that the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina is titleholder of all state property and that the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly is exclusively responsible for regulating the issue — remains an important and urgent task.

Fiscal sustainability

In accordance with my mandate, including my coordination responsibilities, the Office of the High Representative continued to follow, analyse and report on developments and legislative actions related to fiscal sustainability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This included monitoring and reporting to the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board on the activities of the Governing Board of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Indirect Taxation Authority, on which the Office of the High Representative is the only representative of the international community, and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Fiscal Council.

While the Indirect Taxation Authority Governing Board met regularly during the reporting period, long-outstanding issues remained unresolved, such as adjustments to revenue distribution coefficients and debt settlements between the entities. At its 22 March meeting, the Board could not agree on a methodology for the allocation of road toll revenues intended for highway and road construction, holding back the disbursement of 64.7 million marka (KM) in accumulated funds, as well as future revenues from road tolls under new excise legislation.

Additionally, the Indirect Taxation Authority faces the enforcement of a 2015 decision of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Court obliging it to pay more than 15 million KM to the Republika Srpska for default interest on Federation debts to the Republika Srpska in 2009 and 2010 (settled in 2011) as well as penalty interest on this amount. The total amount due is now close to 30 million KM. Both the debt itself and the

failure to settle it result from continued entity disputes over indirect tax revenue allocation and their non-compliance with the regulations in force, yet the Indirect Taxation Authority is being held responsible. The enforcement of the court decision is in process and could have serious and far-reaching consequences for the Indirect Taxation Authority and, by extension, fiscal stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Fiscal Council met three times during the reporting period and focused mainly on issues relevant to the country's cooperation with IMF.

Brcko district

My office continued to provide expert assistance to the Brcko District authorities at their request in preparing by-laws and addressing issues relevant to the implementation of four key pieces of financial legislation adopted in June 2016, which aim to further integrate the Brcko District with the Bosnia and Herzegovina legal system, facilitate implementation of the Bosnia and Herzegovina economic programme negotiated with IMF, and empower the District with instruments for increasing fiscal transparency, fighting the grey economy and generating revenues. My office also continued to provide expert support to the Brcko District Finance Directorate in preparing a new law on budget.

In October, the Brcko District authorities sought the intervention of the Brcko District Supervisor and the assistance of my office over a threat of boycott of government sessions and then again over problematic legislative proposals related to police appointments. The engagement of the Supervisor and my Office with the relevant political parties and District officials helped the District government resume its work, while the police legislation was not pursued further. Moreover, my office oversaw the process of the selection and appointment of the Brcko District Deputy Police Chief, contributing to an orderly appointment.

In February, the Supervisor, with the support of my office, facilitated a possible compromise to unlock long-awaited progress on the Brcko Port modernization project, thereby reducing one cause of political tensions in the District and allowing for the disbursement of international financial assistance. There is also an ongoing concern over the potential continued non-implementation of the amendments to the Decision on Protection of Civilian Victims of War, which corrected discriminatory provisions for the victims of rape and sexual abuse in Brcko.

Although the Brcko District public utility company concluded a contract on 29 December with the Republika Srpska electricity provider on electricity supply to Brcko in 2018, the continued practice of last-minute agreements puts Brcko in a vulnerable negotiating position in securing continued electricity to its residents.

Entrenching the rule of law

Concerning the entrenchment of the rule of law in the areas of migration and asylum, my office continues to assist and support the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities in implementing the 2015 Bosnia and Herzegovina Law on Foreigners and the 2016 Bosnia and Herzegovina Law on Asylum.

D. Electoral issues

Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court decision in the Ljubic case and the forthcoming general elections

As previously reported, in December 2016, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court found several provisions of the Election Law pertaining to the indirect election of delegates from the cantonal assemblies to the Federation House

of Peoples unconstitutional. Acting on a request from Bozo Ljubic (a former Bosnia and Herzegovina parliamentarian) to review these portions of the law, the Court also ordered the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly to correct the unconstitutional provisions within six months. Since the parliament did not do so, the Court deleted the provisions in a separate decision in July 2017.

The absence of these provisions of the election law regulating the election of delegates to the Federation House of Peoples could complicate the process of forming authorities at the Federation entity and Bosnia and Herzegovina state levels after the forthcoming general elections in October 2018. To begin with, until the Federation House of Peoples is constituted, the Federation entity parliament will not be able to pass legislation. Additionally, the Federation president and vice-presidents cannot be elected, since the Federation House of Peoples plays an important role in this responsibility. Without a Federation president and vice-presidents, a new Federation entity government cannot be nominated. Finally, the state-level legislature would also be affected, since the Federation House of Peoples elects some of the delegates to the second chamber of the state parliament, the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Peoples.

Although a number of parties have proposed legislation during the reporting period to address the problem, none of these proposals were the result of consultation and negotiation between the Croat and the Sarajevo-based parties. Both sets of amendments were introduced without prior consultation and constituted more of a statement of maximalist positions than attempts at reaching a compromise. In November, the Social Democratic Party and Democratic Force proposed a new law at the Federation level to address the Federation House of Peoples issue, but this proposal also had little chance of adoption.

Given the urgency of the situation, the European Union and the United States embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been facilitating talks between the political parties. This process has my support and the support of my Office. Nevertheless, the responsibility remains with the domestic political leaders, in particular the parties represented in the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly, to negotiate a solution that will enable the adoption of the necessary amendments to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Election Law. My office continues to closely follow developments regarding the implementation of the Ljubic case decision and its potential impact on the 2018 general elections and the process of government formation thereafter.

Kristo case pending before the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court

The issue of elections to the Federation House of Peoples has been further complicated by a new request, from January 2018, submitted by the then-Chair of the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Representatives, Borjana Kristo, challenging amendments to the Federation Constitution regulating elements of the election of delegates to the Federation House of Peoples. Although elements of this question are regulated in both the Federation Constitution and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Election Law, the Ljubic case only dealt with the law. The more recent request relates to one of the principles set forth by the Federation Constitution concerning the composition and selection of delegates of the Federation House of Peoples, which stipulates that, "in the House of Peoples there shall be at least one Bosniak, one Croat and one Serb from each Canton that has at least one such delegate in its legislative body".

At its 109th plenary session, on 22 March, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court completed a preliminary deliberation of the request (case No. U 4/18) and determined that it would decide on the case in a later plenary session. On 28 March, the Constitutional Court invited my office to provide written

observations with regard to the request in this case in an amicus curiae capacity, as the provisions in question were enacted by the High Representative in 2002 and were never subsequently adopted by the Federation Parliament. Although the minimum representation rule being challenged was part of the original Federation constitution enacted under the Washington Agreement, my predecessor extended this rule to apply to the Serb caucus of the House of Peoples in 2002, when the House was restructured to include Serbs and so-called "Others". It is the common practice of the court to invite my Office to provide an amicus curiae brief when it is deliberating on an issue affected by a previous decision of the High Representative.

E. Challenges to the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Challenges to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the reporting period, statements continued to be made that challenged the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik was again the most frequent exponent of such proclamations, which included calls for and predictions of Republika Srpska independence,[1] denials of the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and references to the Republika Srpska as a State.[2] Statements were made by both the President of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik,[3] and the Croat member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency, Dragan Covic,[4] on the possible territorial reorganization of the Federation. Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Peoples delegate Mario Karamatic threatened the dissolution of the country if the electoral reform issues were not resolved.[5]

Glorification of war criminals and rejection of war crimes verdicts

Following the November 2017 conviction by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia of former Republika Srpska military commander Ratko Mladic of genocide and other war crimes, the Republika Srpska President and other prominent political figures praised general Mladic as a "hero".[6] During the reporting period, the confirmation of earlier war crimes convictions against six former Croat military and political leaders in the *Prlic et al* case similarly resulted in

[1] "I guarantee that [Republika Srpska] independence will fall into our laps like a ripe apple. [Bosnia and Herzegovina] is unsustainable. If the [Republika Srpska] were to leave [Bosnia and Herzegovina] right now, we would not have any single problem to exist like an independent state. If I could make the [Republika Srpska] independent without any human casualties, I would go for it. My policy is to attain that goal by political means." Milorad Dodik, *Novosti*, 13 November 2017.

[2] "Today's gathering is a tribute to the [Republika Srpska]. The Serb people today have two states — Serbia and the [Republika Srpska]." Milorad Dodik, *Sputnik*, 9 January 2018.

[3] "I think that a third entity, which would have equal rights that the [Republika Srpska] and the Federation have now, would significantly strengthen the Croat position." Milorad Dodik, *Vecernji List*, 15 March 2018.

[4] "I am sure that we will achieve our equality. Will that be secured through three federal units or six, that's now a question of artistry. There must be an agreement. I can dream of a third entity. I can dream of some other organization ...." Dragan Covic, *Croatian TV 1*, "*Sunday at Two*", 17 December 2017.

[5] "Rest assured that if amendments to the Election Law do not come and if Croats are not able to elect their own representatives, that will be the end of [Bosnia and Herzegovina]". Mario Karamatic, *Direktno.hr*, 9 January 2018.

[6] "The verdict is not a surprise but will strengthen the attitude of the Serbian people that General Mladic is a hero and a patriot. In an impossible situation, he organized the [Republika Srpska] Army to save the Serbian people from genocide." Milorad Dodik, *N1*, 22 November 2017.

unfortunate revisionist statements from a number of Croat leaders, including the Croat member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency.[7] In January, the Croat majority in the Canton 10 Assembly adopted a "Declaration of the Croat people", which condemned the Tribunal's verdict in the case.

The fact that almost 25 years after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, senior political figures continue to deny the judgments of an international tribunal and glorify war criminals is extremely harmful for the process of reconciliation.

Inflammatory rhetoric about possible war scenarios

I am concerned about the recent readiness by some public figures to make irresponsible statements referencing the possibility of a return to conflict. In March, the leader of the Party for a Better Future, Fahrudin Radoncic, threatened war in case of the creation of a third entity.[8] More recently, significant controversy was caused by two statements by Bosniak presidency member Bakir Izetbegovic, describing in detail weapons production in the Federation and stating that such weapons were not only for export but to "respond" in case of a potential war scenario.[9] These statements followed similar comments reportedly made by the Federation Prime Minister.

Potential Republika Srpska referendum on the state judiciary and the authority of the High Representative

In November 2017, the Republika Srpska National Assembly repealed its 2015 decision to hold a referendum in the Republika Srpska on the validity of the legislation on the Bosnia and Herzegovina Court and Prosecutor's Office and the applicability of these institutions' decisions on the territory of that entity, as well as on the authority and decisions of the High Representative. However, at the same time the Republika Srpska National Assembly adopted conclusions to revisit the referendum in the future and on organizing a petition in the Republika Srpska on the same topics.

While the repeal of its previous decision is welcome, the conclusion to revisit the referendum at a later date is still of concern. While the Republika Srpska authorities have the right to organize referendums on matters falling within the constitutional responsibilities of the entity, a referendum on the issues at hand falls outside this authority and would constitute a challenge to the sovereignty of Bosnia

[7] "The verdict is a crime against every [Croatian Defence Council] officer and all Croat people and as such will not contribute to reconciliation in [Bosnia and Herzegovina], which is today most needed." Dragan Covic, *Oslobodjenje*, 29 November 2017.

[8] "I am telling him that, if he comes to Sarajevo, he should leave the idea of third entity in his suitcases in Banja Luka. At the price of a general war on the territory of the whole [Bosnia and Herzegovina], there will be no third entity. We do support compromise, we do support agreement, we do support talks with everyone and we do know how to talk, but everyone must know where are the boundaries below which we did not go even in 1992 and we will not do it now either." Fahrudin Radoncic, *Dnevni Avaz*, 16 March 2017.

[9] "We will consolidate our defence industry. We will manufacture mobile howitzers, we have already built a rifle, we will manufacture drones, we will consolidate the manufacture of all types of ammunition and rocket systems, etc. It is intended for the market, but also for any 'God forbid' scenario." Bakir Izetbegovic, *TV1*, 12 April 2018.
"Back in '92 people sold cows to buy. They paid three or four thousand marks for a rifle. Never again weak! This is the last time they do such a thing to us. We will make a mobile howitzer, we're actually already making it, the mobile personnel carrier, we have made the rifle and will make that good tactical one, the 12.7, multi-barreled rocket launchers of all possible calibres and all possible ammunition for them, and drones. And we will be like that little man who is not big but angry and well-armed, and let everyone think twice before they provoke him for no reason. It will never happen again that they knock on our doors and we have nothing to respond with." Bakir Izetbegovic, speech in Ahmici, [Bosnia and Herzegovina], *faktor.ba*, 16 April 2018.

and Herzegovina and a violation of the Republika Srpska commitments and obligations arising under the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution, as set forth in annex 4 and under annex 10 to the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Republika Srpska is not entitled to decide on these matters through referendum or otherwise.

Foreign fighters issue

During the reporting period, the relevant Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities have not reported new departures of their citizens from the country to the Syrian Arab Republic or Iraq. The authorities have announced that approximately 50 citizens have returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Syrian Arab Republic or Iraq. According to the most recent information, the Bosnia and Herzegovina State Court has not issued any new judgments beyond the previously reported 23 judgments against individuals, of whom approximately 11 have already completed their sentences.

Radical extremism and potential terrorist threats

In April, acting on a warrant from the Bosnia and Herzegovina Prosecutor's Office, the Bosnia and Herzegovina State Investigation and Protection Agency arrested two people in the village of Gornja Maoca, near Tuzla in the Federation, under suspicion of the criminal offence of terrorism. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Prosecutor's Office reported that the State Investigation and Protection Agency found large quantities of weapons and flags of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Gornja Maoca is inhabited largely by Wahhabi Muslims and has been raided by the State Investigation and Protection Agency on previous occasions.

III. State-level institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina

A. Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency

Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Dragan Covic chaired the Presidency throughout most of the reporting period. On 17 March, member Bakir Izetbegovic assumed the rotating position for the next eight months.

The Presidency met monthly during the reporting period, holding six regular and one urgent session, focused mainly on ensuring progress in the finalization of answers from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Commission questionnaire and fulfilling the conditions for activation of the NATO Membership Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Presidency also agreed on the 2018 state-level budget and adopted the country's foreign policy strategy for the next five years. The Presidency paid official collective visits to Serbia and the Vatican, while individual members also visited Serbia, Croatia and Turkey.

Presidency members had divergent comments and interpretations concerning the November 2017 convictions of wartime Serb military commander Ratko Mladic and six former Croat political and military leaders by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The three members also continue to voice differing positions on major issues concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina relations with neighbouring States, such as the Peljesac Bridge project of Croatia and the demarcation of Bosnia and Herzegovina borders with Serbia.

Nonetheless, in March the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency held an historic trilateral meeting with Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović in Mostar. Participants announced another trilateral meeting in Novi Sad, Serbia, in the future.

B. Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers met regularly throughout the reporting period, holding 21 regular sessions and one telephone session. However, a lack of parliamentary majority support persistently hindered its work, as exemplified by the fact that more than a third of all laws adopted by the Council were subsequently rejected in parliament.

The Council of Ministers' main priorities remained European Union-related issues, including the finalization of responses to the European Commission questionnaire, which were handed over to Commission representatives on 28 February, 15 months after its delivery by the Commission to the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities, on 9 December 2016.

During the reporting period, the Council of Ministers adopted 12 sets of amendments to existing legislation, including a crucial set of excise tax laws and amendments to the Law on the Intelligence-Security Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and two new laws, the 2018 state budget and the Law on Bank Deposit Insurance, which was later withdrawn from parliamentary procedure. After considerable delay, the Council of Ministers adopted the 2018–2021 Rural Development Strategy, which was also adopted by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly. The Council of Ministers adopted its 2018 workplan and numerous strategies and action plans.

In December, the Council of Ministers adopted a decision on temporary financing, due to the Parliamentary Assembly's failure to adopt the 2018 state budget on time. In February, the Council of Ministers adopted a decision on withdrawing the second tranche of funds from the IMF Extended Fund Facility.

C. Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly

The lingering political dysfunction in the country continued to have an impact on the functionality and quality of the Parliamentary Assembly's legislative output in the reporting period. This is particularly true in the case of the House of Representatives, which in two instances needed over a month and a half to complete individual sessions.

Although a parliamentary majority coalition composed of the Party for Democratic Action, the Party for a Better Future, the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska Alliance for Change parties — the Serbian Democratic Party, the Party of Democratic Progress and National Democratic Movement — formally exists, it functions only on a case-by-case basis, with individual delegates increasingly acting independently, depending on the issue. Moreover, the position of the Party for Democratic Action in the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Representatives has been weakened by delegates leaving the party to join the Independent Bloc, a party formed by former Party for Democratic Action members, while the Serbian Democratic Party is also losing members. In the House of Peoples, a former Serbian Democratic Party delegate formed his own party.

In December 2017, the parliament finally adopted a set of excise tax legislation required for the completion of the first review under the IMF Extended Fund Facility. In late January, the parliament adopted the 2018 State budget.

During the reporting period, the House of Representatives held eight regular sessions and the House of Peoples held five regular and two urgent sessions. Cumulatively, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted 12 pieces of legislation, which, except for the 2018 state budget and the Law on Parliamentary Oversight, were in the

form of amendments to existing legislation, and rejected 14 laws, 3 of which were proposed by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers and the remaining 11 by parliamentary delegates.

IV. Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Federation coalition developments

The Federation Government worked consistently throughout the reporting period, holding 15 regular and 25 extraordinary sessions. However, disagreements over proposed legislation continued within the ruling majority coalition composed of the Party for Democratic Action, the Party for a Better Future and the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the Federation Parliament adopting only three new laws and nine sets of amendments to existing legislation. In November, the Party for a Better Future threatened to leave the ruling coalition by the end of the year, but did not follow through on this threat.

The low legislative output in the Federation reflected stagnation in the Federation Parliament, with the Federation House of Representatives holding just one regular session, one thematic session and seven extraordinary sessions, and the Federation House of Peoples holding five extraordinary sessions during the reporting period. In December, delegates from the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatian Democratic Union 1990 parties walked out of a session of the Federation House of Representatives after delegates from other parties adopted a proposal to remove ethnic prefixes from the names of public companies in the Federation.

In March, Federation President Marinko Cavara (of the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina) organized three consecutive meetings with coalition representatives in the Government and the parliament aimed at overcoming the gridlock, with little result. Notably, the Party for Democratic Action declined to attend the third meeting.

No agreement on enabling local elections in Mostar, but positive developments

The responsible political parties had still not reached agreement to enact amendments to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Election Law that would enable the holding of local elections in the city of Mostar, where there have been no local elections since 2008. Representatives of nine political parties have held a series of meetings in Mostar since February, at which they appear to have made some initial progress. However, by all accounts, significant areas of disagreement remain. Nevertheless, the fact that a serious domestically led process is under way is encouraging, and I urge the parties to reach a compromise that would enable the citizens of Mostar to enjoy the same democratic right to elect their local leaders as the citizens in the rest of the country.

The constitutional status of Serbs in the Federation cantons

Over the past year, I have repeatedly urged the leadership of the Herzegovina-Neretva Cantonal Assembly to act to harmonize the canton's constitution with the Federation Constitution in order to ensure the constitutional equality of all three constituent peoples, specifically the Serb people. The canton's constitution does not explicitly reference Serbs as a constituent people or contain provisions providing for the use of the Serb language as an official language or Cyrillic as an official script. Herzegovina-Neretva Canton has been under an obligation to amend its constitution in this regard since 2002, when the High Representative used his executive authorities

to amend the Federation Constitution in the same manner. Similar obligations remain in Posavina Canton and West Herzegovina Canton.

With the Federation cantons having failed to act, in February the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Representatives took the unprecedented measure of adopting an initiative calling upon the authorities in the cantons to adopt the requisite changes to their constitutions within 30 days. Subsequently, House of Representatives Deputy Speaker Mladen Bosic, of the Serbian Democratic Party, filed a motion with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court for a review of constitutionality of the provisions of five cantonal constitutions (four Croat-majority cantons plus the Bosnian Podrinje Canton Gorazde) that he stated do not recognize the constituent status of the Serb people, the Serb language and the Cyrillic script. He stressed that provisions in some cantonal constitutions stipulate that only Bosniaks and Croats are constituent peoples and that the official languages are Bosnian and Croatian.

In April, the Bosnian Podrinje Cantonal Assembly's constitutional-legal committee held a session to discuss Bosic's claims, deeming them unfounded, as the canton had amended its constitution in 2003, adding references to Serbs as a constituent people, the Serb language as an official language and Cyrillic as an official script.

War veterans' protests

In February, veterans of the former army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatian Defence Council blocked several vital intersections near major towns in the Federation, significantly disrupting traffic, making several demands of the authorities, including allowances for unemployed veterans and the establishment of single registry of veterans' associations. In protests in front of the Federation Parliament in April, veterans threatened violence against police. The Federation authorities face significant financial challenges due to the demands of the veteran population.

V. Republika Srpska

During the reporting period, the Republika Srpska ruling coalition, led by the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats in partnership with the Democratic People's Alliance and the Socialist Party of Republika Srpska, remained functional, with the Republika Srpska government meeting regularly. According to available information, the Republika Srpska National Assembly held two regular and two special sessions, adopting six new laws and 16 sets of amendments to existing laws. In late March, the same parties signed a coalition agreement for the 2018 general elections.

Following a series of chaotic sessions of the Republika Srpska National Assembly in the previous period, which were disrupted due to harsh disagreements between ruling coalition delegates and delegates from the opposition Alliance for Change parties, in November the two sides agreed to form a joint commission aimed at drafting an agreement on relations in the National Assembly. However, no agreement was reached, and the opposition parties left the commission in December. As the 2018 general elections approach, the power struggle between the two sides is intensifying, with the ruling coalition accusing the opposition of betraying Republika Srpska interests at the state level and the opposition accusing the ruling coalition of corruption and nepotism.

As described in further detail above, in November the Republika Srpska National Assembly repealed its 2015 decision to organize a referendum on "the

unauthorized and unconstitutional imposition of laws by the High Representative, especially the laws on the Bosnia and Herzegovina Court and Prosecutor's Office and their application on Republika Srpska territory", as well as the accompanying decision regulating the appointment of a referendum commission.

Later in November, the Republika Srpska Ministry of the Interior signed a contract with an arms manufacturer in Serbia to purchase 2,500 long-barrel automatic rifles for the Republika Srpska police, along with 1.5 million rounds of ammunition. This prompted concerned local and international media coverage. The purchase of such military-grade weapons and exorbitant amounts of ammunition, along with an earlier purchase, reported by the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR), of 1,400 similar weapons, is beyond accepted international standards for a police force of approximately 5,000.

In January, the Republika Srpska continued its observance of 9 January as the "Republika Srpska Day" holiday in contravention of a number of decisions by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court. Further tainting the observation of the holiday was the presence in the official "Republika Srpska Day" parade of members of the so-called humanitarian organization from Serbia, "Serb Honour", in full military gear. Local and international media alleged that the group is actually a gang of criminal mercenaries, and the Republika Srpska opposition parties condemned their participation in "Republika Srpska Day" events.

Of similar concern was the March visit to the Republika Srpska of the controversial Russian Night Wolves motorcycle club, apparently at the invitation of the Republika Srpska government. Since December 2014, the Night Wolves club and its leader (who was not part of the group that visited) have been under sanction by the United States Treasury Department for "engaging in ... actions or policies that threaten the peace, security, sovereignty, or territorial integrity of Ukraine". This event, following the "Serb Honour" issue, prompted the Republika Srpska opposition to express concerns that the Republika Srpska authorities were attracting such organizations to use as intimidation during the 2018 electoral campaigns.

Law on Republika Srpska Day challenged before the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court

As previously reported, in September 2016 the Republika Srpska authorities held a referendum on the observance of the "Republika Srpska Day" holiday on 9 January, against two decisions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court, including an interim injunction from the Court against holding the referendum. The Court later confirmed that the referendum had been unconstitutional and annulled its results.

Nevertheless, in October 2016, the Republika Srpska National Assembly adopted the Law on Republika Srpska Day, intended to implement the results of the referendum conducted in violation of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court's decisions. In January 2018, Bosniak and Croat delegates in the Republika Srpska Council of peoples challenged the constitutionality of the Law on Republika Srpska Day.

On 9 January 2018, despite the decisions by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court clearly determining that the designation of 9 January as the "Republika Srpska Day" public holiday is unconstitutional, Republika Srpska authorities observed the holiday throughout the entity. The main event in Banja Luka included a parade of police and civil protection services, sports associations and others. Unlike the previous year, the 3rd Infantry Regiment of the Bosnia and Herzegovina armed forces did not participate.

Non-cooperation with the High Representative

The Republika Srpska government continues to deny my Office access to official information and documents as required under annex 10 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Article IX of annex 10 obliges all authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to fully cooperate with the High Representative. Repeated calls by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board reminding the Republika Srpska authorities of their obligations in this regard have had no impact. The practice of the Republika Srpska government of not providing information and documents as requested by the Office of the High Representative dates to 2007 and contradicts frequent Republika Srpska claims that the entity respects the letter of the General Framework Agreement.

VI. Entrenching the rule of law

Conclusions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council

On 26 October, the Bosnia and Herzegovina High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council adopted conclusions based on information submitted by the Republika Srpska Ministry of Justice's centre for research on war, war crimes and search for missing persons. One of the conclusions called for the extraordinary dismissal of judges and prosecutors without appropriate disciplinary proceedings. These conclusions, coming from the very institution responsible for developing, protecting and promoting judicial independence, were assessed as not reflecting the meaning and purpose of an independent judiciary and instead channelling external undue pressure and influence. As such, they provoked public outcry and strong reactions from the international community. After a prolonged debate, on 27 November the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council issued a new set of conclusions that instead aim to implement recommendations stemming from the European Union peer review process and to obtain adequate information on best practices in vetting judges and prosecutors.

Constitutional Court decision on the Bosnia and Herzegovina Criminal Procedure Code

In early February, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court added to its agenda the issue of the non-enforcement of a decision of the Court from July 2017 finding several provisions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Criminal Procedure Code and Law on the Intelligence-Security Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina unconstitutional. As the six-month deadline set by the Court for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly to correct these provisions had passed, the Court was poised to put those provisions out of force.

Because the provisions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Criminal Procedure Code in question regulate essential aspects of criminal procedure, their repeal without appropriate new provisions adopted would essentially void up to 100 ongoing cases of crime and corruption, and call into question the raising of any new cases by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Prosecutor's Office. For example, the provisions in question regulate when special investigative measures such as communications interception or controlled delivery are permitted and when immunity may be granted in exchange for testimony, as well as certain aspects of the duration of investigations. They also include a general provision that serves as the legal basis for raising an indictment in all cases.

Despite these risks, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Justice, as the competent ministry for the Criminal Procedure Code, did not finalize its proposed amendments to address the Court's decision until after the six-month deadline had

already passed. Moreover, what was finally proposed by the Ministry does not enable the exercise of the full extent of state-level jurisdiction in criminal matters and is not fully aligned with international standards.

In late April, the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Representatives finally adopted, in an urgent procedure, amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code proposed by the Party for Democratic Action and supported by most Federation-based parties, with the notable exception of the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These amendments were consistent with international standards and sufficient to correct the issues identified in the Criminal Procedure Code by the Constitutional Court. As of this report, a further decision by the House of Representatives to submit the amendments to the House of Peoples for adoption is pending.

Concurrently, the House of Peoples is considering amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code proposed by the Croat caucus of the House, which limit the special investigative measures and would hinder the State's ability to exercise its criminal jurisdiction over offences prescribed by the criminal codes of the entities and the Brcko District in instances when such offences endanger the State. I must express my concern that this proposal clearly aims to limit the authority of the Bosnia and Herzegovina judiciary in criminal matters, including corruption, and to weaken the State.

These developments indicate a lack of interest at best by some political parties to resolve the issue in line with international standards, and an interest in undermining the ability of the state-level judiciary to fight organized crime and corruption.

Entity anti-corruption efforts

The specific legislation in the Federation on a special prosecutor and court department for fighting corruption and organized crime, which was passed in 2014, remains unimplemented.

VII. Public security and law enforcement, including intelligence reform

The practice of improper political interference in operational policing has not diminished in the reporting period. Authorities in Tuzla Canton, despite earlier resistance to adhering to the basic standards of the rule of law, have begun the technical process of ensuring the financial independence of the police. Una-Sana Canton has completed the technical steps required to ensure the legal and financial independence of the police for the 2018 budget year.

Posavina Canton, Canton 10 (after a three-year delay) and Tuzla Canton have appointed new police commissioners. In January, the selection procedure began for six of the seven state-level police directors and deputy directors, and the appointment process is still under way. The appointment of the Federation independent board for police remains outstanding since 2015, despite my warning to the Federation Parliament to comply with the law and complete the appointment. The mandate of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Independent Board ended in March 2018. The appointment procedure for the Independent Board in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton remains stalled since March 2017. Sarajevo Canton and Una-Sana Canton appointed new independent boards in February and March of 2018, respectively.

Weapons purchases by police

During the reporting period, significant controversy arose over the purchase by the Republika Srpska police of 2,500 new military-grade long-barrelled weapons from a manufacturer in Serbia. Republika Srpska followed the legal procedure required for importing the new weapons, but the incident drew attention to the purchase and to reported purchases by other police agencies of similar weapons, provoking concern that police forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina are "rearming". In March, EUFOR requested all 16 police agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide information on their respective holdings of long-barrelled weapons, and by April had received information.

VIII. Economy

The 2017 economic performance of Bosnia and Herzegovina was generally positive. Based on available indicators, real gross domestic product growth was estimated at 2.7 per cent, the same as in 2016. Exports and imports registered an increase of 17.4 and 12.2 per cent, respectively, while industrial production increased by 3.1 per cent. Of note is a 60.8 per cent increase in foreign direct investments in the first nine months of 2017 compared with the same period in 2016.

Employment data for December 2017 shows improvement, with a 2.8 per cent increase in registered employment and a 6.85 per cent decrease in registered unemployment. According to official statistics, there are 753,202 employed persons and 475,084 unemployed persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the administrative unemployment rate is 38.7 per cent. The number of pensioners increased by 0.9 per cent and totals 673,100 persons. The most recent Regular Economic Report by the World Bank Group notes a significant drop in unemployment, including youth unemployment, which dropped from 54.3 in 2016 to 45.8 per cent in 2017. However, the report explains that, unlike in neighbouring countries, the decline in Bosnia and Herzegovina was driven by a combination of higher employment and lower labour force participation, indicating the impact of emigration on the country's unemployment estimates. Income levels in December 2017 show no major change compared to those in December 2016: the average net salary amounted to 862 KM, a 1 per cent increase, and the average pension amounted to 364 KM, a 1.5 per cent increase.

Regardless of statistical progress, unemployment figures remain high, and income levels fall well short of the monthly estimated consumer basket. Data showing 16.9 per cent of households living in poverty is of serious concern.

Economic ratings in the reporting period also point to areas in which significant improvement is needed. The World Bank's "Doing business" report for 2018 ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina 86th of 190 economies in terms of ease of doing business, the lowest rating of all Balkan countries. The Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom for 2017 ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina 91st of 180 countries globally and 38th of 44 countries in Europe, with the overall score below the regional average and just above the world average. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2017 ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina as 91st of 180 countries, eight places down from the previous year. The country's credit rating remains "B with stable outlook", as confirmed by Standard & Poor's on 9 March.

The banking sector is assessed as generally stable and liquid and should be further strengthened following the adoption of a new state-level Law on Deposit Insurance as part of Bosnia and Herzegovina commitments under the IMF Extended Fund Facility arrangement. According to the entity banking agencies, 14 banks in the

Federation and 7 banks in the Republika Srpska registered net profits in the first nine months of 2017, while 2 banks — 1 in each entity — reported losses.

Fiscal issues

The overall fiscal situation is relatively stable, mainly due to the continued growth of indirect tax revenues, domestic borrowing and international financial assistance.

In 2017, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Indirect Taxation Authority registered another annual record collection of indirect tax revenues, totalling 7.04 billion KM, a 6.1 per cent increase over 2016. The positive trend continued in 2018, with a 13.2 per cent increase in the first two months over the same period in 2017.

On 9 February, IMF completed the first review of the country's economic performance under the Extended Fund Facility arrangement (totalling 553.3 million Euro) and disbursed its second tranche in the amount of 145.8 million KM (97.2 million KM to the Federation and 48.6 million KM to the Republika Srpska). The completion of the first review was possible following the completion of all prior actions by Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities, including the 15 December adoption of state-level legislation increasing excise taxes on fuel.

The adoption of 2018 budgets extended beyond 2017 for most levels of government in the country. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly adopted the 2018 state budget on 25 January. The adopted budget totals 1.954 billion KM, of which 950 million KM — the same amount as in the last six years — is planned for the state institutions, and 1.004 billion KM — 7 million KM less than in 2017 — is planned for foreign debt servicing. The state institutions' finances raise a few concerns. The budget has been fixed at the same level since 2012, as has the State's share in indirect tax revenues, which accounts for over 80 per cent of the State's revenue. Additionally, the State's revenue from other sources shows a continued decline. Consequently, the 2018 state budget shows a deficit of 60.2 million KM, to be covered by the 2017 surplus. It must be underlined that the amount available to the state institutions allows them to cover basic current expenditures, but it is insufficient to allow them to function at maximum capacity and fulfil their obligations.

The Federation budget was adopted on 19 January at 2.882 billion KM, a 6 per cent increase over the rebalanced 2017 budget. Domestic revenues are planned in the amount of 2.269 billion KM (a 6.8 per cent increase), while the 613 million KM deficit (a 35.4 per cent increase) is to be covered by domestic and foreign borrowing. Unlike in previous years, the Federation budget includes a significant allocation (250 million KM) for capital investments in road construction. At the same time, the amount needed for the Federation total debt payment (1.11 billion KM) and interest on borrowing (124.9 million KM) is as high as 54 per cent of total domestic revenues planned in this year's Federation budget, and is cause for concern.

The stability of the Federation pension and disability insurance fund was the key motive for the parliamentary adoption of a new Law on Pension and Disability Insurance on 25 January. Key changes include: an increase of pensions by 10 per cent and 5 per cent for those who retired before 31 July 1998 and 31 December 2007, respectively; a pension calculation scoring system based on years of service; minimum retirement limits; incentives for late retirement; and the harmonization of pensions with costs of living. Minimum and guaranteed pensions will remain the same. A significant change for pensioners is that payments will be guaranteed by the Federation budget following the integration of the Fund into the treasury system within two years. The fiscal implications of foreseen changes on the budget and the pension fund have not been fully analysed.

The Federation faces continued challenges due to the demands of war veterans. Allocations to veterans from the Federation, cantonal and municipal budgets are substantial, totalling approximately 650 million KM in 2017 (of which 570 million KM came from the Federation budget). The total budgetary funds allocated to veterans since the end of the war is estimated at approximately 11 billion KM. New demands include a registry of all participants in the war, monthly allowances for unemployed demobilized veterans, and the streamlining of veteran associations.

The fiscal situation at the cantonal level shows improvement. All 10 Federation cantons have adopted their 2018 budgets, 8 of them having done so before 31 December. The 2018 budget is also in place in the city of Mostar, after it was proclaimed by the mayor in agreement with the head of the Finance Department, in accordance with an exceptional amendment to the Federation Law on Budgets adopted by the Federation Parliament. The proclaimed budget amounts to 59.9 million KM, a 9 per cent increase over the 2017 rebalanced budget. Brcko District adopted its budget on 26 March, just ahead of the 31 March deadline, in the amount of 243.98 million KM, a 1.3 per cent decrease from the rebalanced 2017 budget.

International obligations and other issues

On 14 December, the Energy Community Ministerial Council expressed its regret over the continued lack of progress by Bosnia and Herzegovina in the implementation of its obligations under the Energy Community Treaty. This was due to entity disputes over regulating certain aspects of the gas sector at the state level. The Energy Community sanctions against Bosnia and Herzegovina, introduced in October 2015, have thus far had no effect on resolving the disputes.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Public Railways Corporation faces financial constraints for the second consecutive year due to the unilateral decision of the Republika Srpska to restrict its financing. Such a move could seriously threaten the stability of the only corporation established thus far under annex 9 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and which is crucial for proper coordination and harmonization of the railway sector. This is in addition to the threat posed by the current 16 March 2017 conclusion of the Republika Srpska government requesting the Republika Srpska Ministry of Transport and Communications to initiate a review of the agreement between the Federation and the Republika Srpska on the establishment of a joint public railway corporation as part of the transportation corporation, concluded in 1998 under annex 9 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

IX. Return of refugees and displaced persons

The realization of the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their pre-war homes remains central to the fulfilment of the provisions of annex 7 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it requires authorities at all levels "to create in their territories the political, economic, and social conditions conducive to the voluntary return and harmonious reintegration of refugees and displaced persons, without preference for any particular group".

Education remains a contentious issue in several returnee communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Republika Srpska authorities continue to refuse to acknowledge the right of Bosniak returnee schoolchildren to refer to their language as "Bosnian" in accordance with a 2016 decision of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court, opting instead for the selective application of a provision of the Republika Srpska constitution referring to "the language of the Bosniak people" while

referring to the language of the other two constituent peoples as "Serbian" and "Croatian". At the start of the spring semester, this issue triggered protests and student boycotts in returnee communities around Zvornik.

At the same time, Serb returnee students in the Federation, particularly in the Croat-majority Canton 10, continue to demand the introduction of the Serbian language in their education, without success.

X. Media developments

Biased and politically influenced reporting continues to plague the three public broadcasters, the independence of which is compromised by problems in financing, reluctance to implement legal requirements for system integration and politicized appointments to management. As a result of the rise in destabilizing and divisive public rhetoric and reporting throughout the country, this problem is becoming more acute.

With regard to financing, two of the three public broadcasting services within the Bosnia and Herzegovina public broadcasting system (Radio-televizija Bosne i Hercegovine and Radio-televizija Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine) have partially addressed financing problems through an agreement that the Sarajevo-based electricity supplier will collect radio-television tax. However, the financing system remains imbalanced, as the Republika Srpska broadcaster is not part of this arrangement, nor are the other two electricity suppliers, while some politicians in Croat-majority areas urge citizens not to pay the tax, contrary to relevant legislation.

Problems also exist in implementing relevant legislation concerning the registration of a joint legal entity, the goal of which is to enable the transfer from analogue to digital broadcasting for the Bosnia and Herzegovina public broadcasting system and to serve as a joint digital network operator.

Thus, due to the inability of the public broadcasters to act outside political influence and the lack of will among the political parties in power to allow the proper implementation of relevant legislation, the public broadcasting system exists only on paper. This is unfortunate, as the current legislation represents a solid legal base for a proper public broadcasting system that would serve the interests of the Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens in accordance with generally accepted programming principles.

XI. European Union military force

The European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR, with its continued executive mandate, plays a vital role in supporting the country's efforts to maintain a safe and secure environment, which significantly contributes to the ability of my Office and other international organizations to fulfil our respective mandates.

XII. Future of the Office of the High Representative

The political directors of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board met in Sarajevo on 7 and 8 December 2017 to assess progress in implementing the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and underlined their unequivocal commitment to territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their full support to me as the High Representative in ensuring respect for the Agreement and carrying out my mandate in accordance with annex 10

thereof, and relevant Security Council resolutions. The political directors reinforced the need to complete the 5+2 agenda, which remains necessary for the closure of the Office. The next meeting of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board is scheduled for 5 and 6 June 2018 in Sarajevo.

My Office continues its fiscally responsible approach to budget planning, and the results are evident. Since the beginning of my mandate in March 2009, the Office's budget has been reduced by 53 per cent and my staff by over 58 per cent. Given the deep and ongoing nature of the cuts, it is important to highlight that, considering the realities of the situation on the ground and as entitled under annex 10 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I must remain equipped with the budget and the staff required to carry out my mandate effectively.

XIII. Reporting schedule

In keeping with the practice of submitting regular reports for onward transmission to the Security Council, as required by Security Council resolution 1031 (1995), I herewith present my nineteenth regular report. I would be pleased to provide additional information should the Secretary-General or any Council member require it at any time. The next regular report to the Secretary-General is scheduled for October 2018.